ECONOMIC EPISODES:

CRISIS AND THE AFFECTIVE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2013

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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This dissertation advances critical scholarship around the performative character of “the economy” in the wake of neoliberalism. I argue that public moods – what Paolo Virno calls the emotional situation – have become fundamental to how “the economy” is understood and represented by economists, politicians, pundits, and everyday people alike. Moreover, the emotional situation affects how the economy is experienced – both psychically and culturally. I examine four economic moments in the last 40 years – stagflation, Reaganomics, dotcom bubbles, and most recently mass home foreclosures – alongside the respective moods attendant to them – depression, burn-out, euphoria, and rage. A goal of my dissertation is to demonstrate how depression, burn-out, euphoria, and rage shape understandings and ideologies of what is economic or non-economic at different points in history since the 1970s. I argue that the barring of feelings and mood from the strictly economic has become a key mode of governance in the United States, even as “the economy” increasingly becomes the object of public concern and

attention. Thus my dissertation takes to task how “the economy” functions as a kind of genre with reverberations in policy-making, mental disorders, social protest, to name a few.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The most valuable lesson that I have taken from graduate school is that great ideas happen not so much in solitary reflection but through relationships, in and out of classrooms, through friendships, and in collaborations. This work is a reflection of the extraordinary people and relationships that animate me and my work. I am so very fortunate to have had Patricia Clough as my dissertation director. Patricia has been a generous and patient mentor and friend, eager to think through ideas and intuition wherever they lead. Patricia's brilliance, humor, and creativity are infinitely inspiring. Stanley Aronowitz taught me the necessity of close reading and dialectical thinking, skills I rely on every day, especially as a teacher. Lynn Chancer came later to this project but she has only offered the most incisive suggestions and insight. In our shared work, I have learned from her the value of cogency and clarity of argument. My outside readers from New York University have been anything but outside: Lisa Duggan has taught me that everything is political and that fearlessness is a virtue; Randy Martin is a kind of wizard, able to put into words the most complex of ideas. His is a talent I hope to someday realize myself.

My friends and teachers at the Graduate Center have been unparalleled in their encouragement, care, and intelligence: Colin Ashley, Cathy Bork, Tom Buechele, Elizabeth Bullock, Erynn Casanova, Kim Cunningham, Colleen Eren, Greg Goldberg, Charles Green, Karen Gregory, Sam Han, Patrick Inglis, Kate Jenkins, Mike Jolley, Eben Kirksey, Lauren Martin, Soniya Munshi, Andrew McKinney, Christina Nadler, Julie Netherland, Victoria Pitts-Taylor, Mitra Rastegar, Rachel Schiff, Alyson Spurgas, Pam Stone, Polly Sylvia, Sandra Trappen, Kara Van Cleaf, Jerry Watts, Aaron Weeks, Craig Willse, and Ilgin Yorukoglu have been ideal colleagues. Catherine Silver, George Cavalletto, Tom DeGloma, Micki McGee, Vikash Singh, Arlene Stein, and members of the psychosocial reading group have been lovely interlocutors. Special thanks to the Mellon Committee on Science Studies for their constructive criticism of my work in its nascent state. I am grateful to Kandice Chuh for providing me the means to write when I needed it. Traci Drummond and her colleagues at the Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State University were most welcoming and helpful. Erin Martineau has offered careful editing assistance at a moment's notice.

Innumerable friends and colleagues have supplied intellectual nourishment and personal support over the years, including Patty Ahn, Lauren Berlant, Mandy Berry, Taylor Black, Fiona Brideoake, Barbara Browning, Ann Cvetkovich, Josh Chambers-Letson, Jonathon Flatley, Shari Frilot, Elena Glasberg, Sam Green, Josh Guzman, Jennifer Doyle, Leon Hilton, Elizabeth Long, Heather Love, Dana Luciano, Heather Lukes, Molly McGarry, Mara Mills, Albert Munoz, Amber Musser, Tavia N'Yongo, Ann Pellegrini, Roya Rastegar, Jasbir Puar, Karen Shimakawa, Katherine Sugg, Aliza Svartz, Karen Tongson, Alina Troyano, Ela Troyano, and Tony Viego. Conversations with Shane Vogel have been fun and generative. This project came to life in a seminar with Anna McCarthy who continues to inspire and foster my work and thought.

José Muñoz has kept me alive emotionally, physically, and intellectually. He has been the most supportive of friends and mentors, taking my ideas seriously when I could not. Ricardo Montez convinced me that New York was the only place to do graduate study, and he was right. Nao Bustamante rejuvenated me when I most needed it. My sister wives Alex Pitman and Jeanne Vacarro have listened to every complaint and read every word. James McMackin's death haunts these pages. JJ Catanzarita and Lucy are always in my heart.

It goes without saying that I am impossible without my family. My mom, dad, and brothers are endless sources of love and support. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my Aunt Bette and Uncle Don Reaser who called me “Doctor John” long before I thought I could be.

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INTRODUCTION

ECONOMIC EPISODES

One of the important lessons from the sociology of knowledge is that our ideas and modes of thinking stem not only from our personal biography but also from our social and cultural milieu. As much as we would like to believe that our ideas and thoughts belong exclusively to ourselves, theorists of ideology from Karl Marx to Louis Althusser have argued that how and what we think are often in the service of dominant classes and capital. However, when it comes to emotions, feeling, and mood, sociology has been resistant to the notion that feelings or emotions might come from without, much less that they can circulate without a human subject. A primary thesis of this dissertation is that feelings, moods, and affects have come to occupy an important role in contemporary social life. Focusing particularly on feelings around "the economy," I suggest that what are often considered to be individual emotions must also be seen as shared orientations toward what is popularly conceptualized as the economy. Both private and public, these collective feelings and moods are in part a response to crisis or change; at the same time they present the possibility for potential politics and expanded understandings of subjectivity.

"Economic Episodes: Crisis and the Affective Politics of Everyday Life" examines how collective moods and feelings both reflect and shape *the economy* as a primary discursive formation in the United States since the economic crises of the early 1970s. I argue that it is in this milieu of crisis that *the economy* as a conceptually cohesive entity began to emerge in the popular imagination—on the one hand as a public problem demanding attention from the cultural consumer-as-citizen, and on the other hand as the exclusive domain of experts. The dissertation homes in on how this paradox around the economy—at once ubiquitous and bracketed—comes to bear as collective sentiments, moods, and feelings. I examine how public imaginations of the economy and public feelings mutually resonate in popular culture, news media, policy, education, and psychiatric disorders, to name a few. I ask how and why the economy as a cultural genre has entered individuals' everyday lives at the level of work, relationships, emotions, and the psyche. In particular, I consider how depression, burnout, euphoria, and rage resonate with specific historical-economic moments, beginning in the 1970s and today still unfolding: stagflation, Reaganomics, the dot-com bubble, and most recently mass home foreclosures. Drawing on a number of traditions to frame my work, I analyze a range of objects and texts, including film, television, and novels; newspapers and other popular news media; and academic economics and social psychology in order to "tap in" to a particular mood within its historical context and alongside economic discourses and policy of its time. My approach is interdisciplinary, yet my work continues and advances long-standing sociological concerns around the relationship between subjectivity and the development of capitalism and modernity. Before explicating how I understand these public moods and feelings, I will turn first to the economy and its meaning in contemporary culture.

What We Mean When We Talk about the Economy

As a matter of public and private concern, talk about "the economy"—its health, its functioning, its potentials—permeates social life now in unprecedented ways, framing anything from political branding to health care debates to individual job and relationship decisions. In spite of its ubiquity in political discourse, news media, and everyday parlance, *the economy* as a unified entity in popular imaginations is relatively new in the United States. And like its analogs *society* and *culture*, *the economy* seems to represent something particular even while it might entail any number of people, institutions, processes, etc. To offer a simple example: *society* might refer to an abstract whole, often grounded in the nation-state (e.g., "American society"); it might also refer to some group, like "intellectual society" or "high society." *Society* is also the reference point against which we understand processes like socialization, racism, discrimination, and inequality. In popular parlance, *society* has also become tantamount to public opinion or perceived public opinion, as in "Society tells us to be thin." Thus, *society* denotes everything and nothing at the same time, it is at once tangible and abstract. *The economy* is similarly ambiguous: It may simultaneously signify an abstract whole (e.g., "the global economy") or particular parts (e.g., "the dot-com economy"). *The economy* is the reference point for certain processes—inflation, unemployment—but also an expression of public opinion (e.g., "the economy is bad, but getting better.")

More than a definitional problem, the conceptual excessiveness of *the economy* points to larger questions of history, governance, culture, and of course political economy. According to Timothy Mitchell (1998, 2005), *the economy* as a unified, cohesive, and distinct entity emerged in the mid-twentieth century. While economic processes had long being viewed as distinct from other kinds of social-cultural processes—beginning with the classical political economists, on to John Maynard Keynes—they were still seen as embedded in larger social relations. What is new, Mitchell (2005:133) writes, "was the notion that these processes form a singular and self-contained totality whose internal mechanisms and balances were subject to external shocks or manipulations, such external impulses creating reverberations throughout the internal machine." In the postwar years, the notion of *national economies* served two interrelated functions: (1) as a "commonsensical" boundary for establishing aggregate economic measures; (2) as an administrative tool for state-building in the wake of decolonization and the collapse of empire. Significantly for Mitchell, the notion of *the economy* became a means for securing the United States' global hegemony and "recasting the international order" at the dawn of the Cold War.

Mitchell's understanding of the economy is in part indebted to Michel Foucault's (1988, 2007) concept of *governmentality*, which he developed in his 1978 lectures on "Security, Territory, Population" at the College de France. According to Foucault, government appears in the nineteenth century as a kind of power directed at securing a population—securing not only its health and wellbeing as a whole, but also its capacities as an instrument of government. Simply put, population is both the means and the end of government. For Foucault, the development of government as a type of power hinges on an understanding of *the economy* and its attendant knowledges. As he puts it, "the constitution of a knowledge (*savoir*) of government is absolutely inseparable from the constitution of a knowledge of all the processes revolving around population in the wider sense of what we now call 'the economy'" (Foucault 2007:106). Implicitly, *the economy* entails not just the central concerns of political economy, such as labor, prices, and markets, but also health and psychiatry, culture and ideology, or any other statistically measurable attribute of the governed population. Political theorist Jodi Dean (2012:94–95) calls this a "liberal hollowing out of sovereignty," because collective power gets displaced onto an economy that cannot ever fully be known: "as [the people] are limited to their individual singularity, the economy gains the force and power of collective energies and engagements."

Thus far I have defined *the economy* as a historically situated knowledge formation and as a tool of governmental power. Such a perspective is not incompatible with much of the scholarship in American economic sociology. Viviana Zelizer (2005, 2011), for example, dispels the widespread notion that the economy is some impersonal external force impervious to intimate relationships, such as office romances or caring for the elderly. Rather, it necessarily involves personal relationships and idiosyncratic motives of individuals and particular groups—even if economists refuse to acknowledge them. In her comparative work on economists in France, Britain, and the United States, Marion Fourcade (2010) shows how understandings of the economy and its functioning crystallize very differently depending on the institutional and cultural differences of the countries. Although these works are exceptional in many respects, there is a tendency in sociology to treat the category of the economy uncritically: On the one hand, it is taken for granted as a given entity with clear boundaries; on the other hand, it is considered to be socially constructed and therefore merely ideological. Both perspectives result in a kind of essentializing, albeit for different reasons. In effort to avoid this trap, it is important here to trace the multiple kinds of realities that *the economy* references—not only the group of institutions, policies, and flows of capital and labor that are the typical subject of political economy, but also their co-extensive discursive formations, cultural objects, and public moods. In light of this, I treat *the economy* in this dissertation neither as a strictly fictitious, ideological category nor as one that always references some material reality. Rather, I understand it as a performative category that denotes what is efficacious or even believable as economic at different points in recent history.

As described above, Mitchell shows how *the economy* became a tool for securing dominance by the United States abroad. This dissertation asks how and why *the economy* emerges at home as a primary concern since the 1970s, and I argue that it is in the milieu of crisis that *the economy* becomes a potent category in both public and private life. Of course, the early 1970s is oft-cited as the dawn of neoliberalism, a time when the embedded liberalism that had guided the postwar boom began to break down. Along with stagnation in production and capital accumulation, the Breton Woods agreements on fixed exchange rates were abandoned, signaling the United States' floundering power in the global economy. The OPEC oil embargo of 1973 exacerbated the problem, leading to high unemployment and skyrocketing inflation (see Harvey 2005). Giovanni Arrighi (1994) has shown how capital tends to expand in *systemic cycles*, from the Italian city-states, to Dutch commercialism, to the British Empire, to the United States' current dominance. For him, the crisis in accumulation that began in the late 1960s and early '70s, and the subsequent shift from commodity production to finance, signals the waning of the United States' dominance of the current systemic cycle of production.

The response and outcomes of this political-economic shift have been disastrous: IMF- and World Bank-led globalization has left developing countries in debt and open-through-coercion to foreign capital to exploit cheap resources, especially labor. Domestically, deregulation, tax cuts, and the dismantling of the welfare state have effectively redistributed wealth and income upwardly, intensifying social inequalities and vulnerable populations' precariousness while solidifying the power of the capitalist class. Other critics have demonstrated how neoliberalism entailed a backlash toward women, people of color, and other "minoritized" groups after the significant political gains of the 1960s and '70s (see Duggan 2003). In all of these cases, the triumph of neoliberal doctrine and policy has relied on mobilizing a notion of *the economy* and its function—not only in political discourse but, as I argue, in the realm of affect, feelings, or what Paolo Virno (1996, 2004) calls the *emotional situation*. Before returning to the question of the economy and affect, I trace how sociology has conceived *affect* and *emotion* as well as how I use *emotional situation* and related terms.

Emotion, Affect, Sociology

In a recent essay, George Steinmetz (2005) argued that many of sociology's methodological and conceptual assumptions that were established in a milieu of the steady, predictable, and managed social world of Fordism began to break down alongside crises in the economy and state. While this applies primarily to mainstream American sociology, which sought to quantify the social world through what he calls *methodological positivism*, Steinmetz (2005) asserts that some of the critical subfields that emerged in the 1970s and '80s, such as historical sociology, cultural sociology, and feminist sociology, increasingly employed less restrictive epistemological approaches including hermeneutics, post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis as the (il)logics of post-Fordism became more entrenched after 1989. As Steinmetz might put it, the conditions of plausibility for this or that mode of sociological knowledge production resonate with the ways in and extent to which the economy, populations, and everyday life are regulated.

I extend Steinmetz's argument here by considering how sociology has conceptualized character, emotion, moods, and (more generally) subjectivity over the last 50 years, and in relation to Fordism/post-Fordism, the vicissitudes of capitalism, and most recently neoliberalism. My goal here is not to give an exhaustive review but to illuminate a minor[1] trajectory that my work will continue. Of course, concern for how capitalism and subjectivity are intertwined is basic and long-standing in sociology. Classical concepts such *alienation*, *disenchantment*, and *anomie*—and others developed in sociology's now lesser-known early literatures[2]—set the foundation in twentieth-century American sociology for important and wide-ranging inquiry into the relationship between social "structures" and personality, character, and emotions. Talcott Parsons (1951) theorized the structural foundations of social action as an interrelationship of social, cultural, and personality systems, the last of which he characterized as the institutional foundation for socialization and role development. Although he was influenced by the work of Sigmund Freud and the American import of psychoanalysis (qua ego psychology), Parsons continued to emphasize how the personality system operated toward the integration of the individual throughout her lifetime. In part, this epistemological stance reflected the institutional sedimentation of sociology in the US as university departments were established and monies flowed. Nonetheless, Parson's work remained influential in American sociology for thinking

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[1] Deleuze and Guattari (1986) characterize *minor literatures* as those constructed by a minority within a major language. For them, minor literatures are a method of making the minority political, of giving it collective value.

[2] See for example, Gabriel Tarde's *The Laws of Imitation* or Georg Simmel's "The Metropolis and Mental Life."

about the relationship between psychic and social levels, or, as is often dubbed, the micro-/macro-link.[3]

A good example of this approach to the study of personality is William H. Whyte Jr.'s *The Organization Man* (1956). Here, Whyte attempts to show how the values and ethics of the middling bureaucrat set the American "temper." According to him, the organization man compulsively worships the organization, epitomized in his zealous fidelity and dedication to it. More than mere conformity, the organization man's personality is founded in deep-seated scientism: a belief in the power of "engineering," the capacity for anything to be measured, and the value of organizational equilibrium—in other words, the basic tenets of Fordism. Because of this, the social ethic particular to the organization man is one that is practical and can be learned and tested. Moreover, this ethic is particularly powerful since it emphasizes togetherness and belonging to the group.[4] Whyte describes the social ethic of the organization man as an ideology, but I think it would be safe also to call it a "personality type"—one that refers to the values and mindset of a particular role (that of the middling bureaucrat) at a specific time in history (the heyday of American Fordism).

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[3] As Steinmetz points out, Parsons resisted the "methodological positivism" that came about in postwar US sociology as institutionalized in university departments or rewarded through various government or private grants. Ironically, Parsons's seemingly all-encompassing theory of systems assured the discipline to advance a kind of method (quantitative, categorical) and epistemology detached from any theoretical or historical situation. In short, Parsons's conceptualization of *functional systems* fit neatly into the new demands of sociology by the state, capital, etc. at this time.

[4] Many social scientific fields during this time were interested in group dynamics, reflecting the Fordist demand for cooperation and social functioning. For example, psychoanalyst W. R. Bion (1970) studied group dynamics in the clinical context. Alford (1989) extends much of Bion's thought to the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School.

David Riesman (1961) distinguishes *character* from *personality* in that it organizes drives and satisfaction among the majority of individuals in a given society and over longer periods of history. For him, *character* is how we approach the world and other people; *social character* is shared by classes, nations, etc. We could think of *personality* as orienting action and *character* as orienting motivation. In his influential book *The Lonely Crowd* (1961), Riesman employs the Weberian ideal types of tradition-, inner-, and outer-direction to conceptualize how social character changes with economic development and especially population dynamics.[5] In particular, he looks at how inner-directed character (represented perhaps by the Protestant ethic) is being replaced in the twentieth century by an outer-directed character where the source of motivation comes from without, as the individual seeks guidance and approval from other people. Importantly, while the characteristic psychological lever for inner-directed character is guilt, it is anxiety for the contemporary outer-directed character since individuals are in constant need of approval (economically, emotionally, in terms of status) from other people, the mass media, etc. Further, this anxiety often manifests as conflict or agitation between people at a range of levels, in interpersonal relationships, politics, racial conflicts, or even national conflicts.

Like Riesman, Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (1964) complicate the theory of the personality or person by attempting to reconcile a strictly sociological conception of the *social man* ("man as person") that focuses on roles and action, with the fact of biology ("man as organism"). For them, a psychic structure made up of emotions, sensations, and impulses mediates and connects man as person and man as organism. Together, organism, psychic

[5] See also *The Crowd* by Gustav le Bon.

structure, and person comprise social "character" that shapes motivation and conduct within five institutional orders. And, further, just as senses are specialized and contextual, character for Gerth and Mills is always historical and dynamic.

These studies of personality and character paved the way for a coherent "sociology of emotions," which had its first official session at the American Sociological Association in 1975.[6] In many ways, the field was a feminist response to sociology's neglect of the emotional work performed by women at home and in the workplace, epitomized in Arlie Hochschild's pathbreaking work. Theodore Kemper (1995) suggested that the emergence of the sociological study of emotion in the 1970s was in part a response to the zeitgeist of the 1960s with its emphasis on expressiveness; yet, he predicted (in 1990) that the sociology of emotions would eventually become assimilated into the "normal scientific" work (in Thomas Kuhn's sense) of sociology. These concerns notwithstanding,[7] the sociology of emotions has since become an established and varied field, informed by numerous theoretical traditions (structuralism, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, symbolic interaction, cognitive science, biology) and addressing a range of topics (work, mental health, social movements). It is important to note here that, in a most general statement about the field, the sociology of emotions usually deals with emotions coming from within individuals or groups as a response to some sort of outward

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[6] The sociology of emotions could be included in some of the critical subfields emergent in the 1970s such as historical sociology, cultural sociology, feminist sociology, and others cited by Steinmetz because it departed from established sociology in its methods and basic conceptual assumptions.

[7] Again, Steinmetz argues that the critical subfields emergent in the 1970s and '80s were not just "domesticated" as Craig Calhoun has argued but developed novel modes of inquiry even as they were incorporated into the discipline institutionally.

stimulus, be it structural or situational. The sociology of emotions tends to reject psychoanalytic conceptions of *interiority*[8]; at the same time, it also fails to conceive of emotion, affect, or mood that are not necessarily tethered to a human subject.

In the last decade, many scholars and theorists have (re)turned to the concept of *affect* (rather than emotion) in order to trouble any strict division between the individual and society, or between inside and outside (see Clough 2008). Aptly described by Jonathan Flatley (2008), "*emotion* suggests something that happens inside and tends toward outward expression, [whereas] *affect* indicates something relational and transformative. One *has* emotions; one is affected *by* people or things." Unlike emotions, affects are not necessarily bound to an external object or of a fixed duration; rather affect is the body's capacity to affect and be affected, which again suggests not only the body's openness to the world but also a larger economy of affect. Steven Shaviro (2010:2) for example has argued that *affect* be seen as "a kind of ambient, free-floating sensibility . . . [that] cannot be attributed to any subject in particular." Importantly, he understands affects not just as reflecting social processes but as an actual part of the process of constituting the social world. It is this aspect of affect that I am interested in exploring in "Economic Episodes."

In many ways, the understanding of *affect* as ambient and generalized resembles the concept of *mood*. The idea of moods or public moods is not one typically used in sociology. As indicated above, the sociology of emotions treats emotions as reactions or responses from

[8] A forthcoming volume edited by Lynn Chancer and me (2014) explores some of the historical and epistemological reasons for the marginalization of psychoanalysis in American sociology as well as its re-emergence, and its necessity, in sociology and related fields.

outward conditions—in other words, as emergent from an individual subject due to some stimulus, whether general (e.g., rationalized modernity) or specific (e.g., a terrorist attack, job loss). An influential sociologist of emotions, Lynn Smith-Lovin (1995:119) observes, "Perhaps because of their transsituational nature, moods have not been studied extensively by sociologists." Mood has been dealt with more thoroughly in philosophy, most notably by Martin Heidegger (1996). He used the term *mood* (*Stimmung*) to indicate an affective atmosphere[9] that orients the self in the world—our intentions, attachments, etc. For Heidegger, moods transcend single experiences or single events; they are, rather, ontologically the most fundamental way we are disposed to the world—in other words, moods permeate and happen at the level of everyday life.

On the other hand, social studies of *affect*[10] come closer to a conception of mood by showing how the distinction between the individual and the social is dubious, one that eclipses the fundamentally social nature of how humans (and nonhumans) are mutually affecting. With some notable exceptions, affect studies tends to be only loosely historical, or even ahistorical, usually emphasizing affective or immaterial *labor* when history is addressed at all. One way of enhancing the concept of affect is through Raymond Williams's (1977:131) notion of *structure of feeling*, which is "a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material." Structures of feeling are historically distinct; they are a particular sense of a generation or period. At the same time, structures of feeling are always in process culturally, and thus organize distinct

[9] The language of "atmosphere" has also been used by contemporary theorists of affect such as Teresa Brennan (2004) and Brian Massumi (2005).

[10] See for example Clough (2008), Brennan (2004), Flatley (2009), Massumi (2005), Ngai (2006), Puar (2009), Sedgwick (2003).

social relationships and ways of being in the world. Although Williams points out their processual character, his use of the word *structure* in *structures of feeling* also suggests something more institutional with longevity. In recent publications (Andrews 2009a and Andrews 2009b) and in this dissertation, I engage Paolo Virno's (1996, 2004) concept of the *emotional situation* in order to advance social studies of emotion and affect while addressing some of their impasses.[11]

For Virno, the *emotional situation* refers to pervasive but possibly disparate feelings that emerge within multiple contexts (work, leisure, politics, culture) in a given era or moment in history. The emotional situation is fundamentally ambivalent—manifesting as consent and as conflict. The emotional situation draws from cognitive as much as from affective faculties, which, for Virno, points to how it represents what he calls "publicness without a public sphere." We could think of the emotional situation as a mood that is both intimate and impersonal, both ubiquitous and individualized. My engagement with Virno's concept of the *emotional situation* has helped me to think about how public moods frame specific economic and political milieus historically. In this dissertation, I look at how affects operate within those milieus discursively, ideologically, and materially by homing in on how "the economy" takes form around certain events, specifically stagflation, Reaganomics, the dot-com bubble, and mass home foreclosures. The concept of *emotional situation* is my primary reference point because of its emphasis on

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[11] Virno is an influential thinker in the Italian Autonomist movement. Many other works from this tradition also address the issue of feelings and subjectivity in the context of post-Fordism and contemporary capitalism. See for example Berardi (2009) and Hardt and Negri (2000).

situation, its fundamentally episodic character. Nonetheless, I use terms like affect, affective atmosphere, mood, public moods, ambient feelings, and others more or less interchangeably.[12]

"Economic Episodes" continues a minor trajectory within sociology that I have delineated above, from personality and character studies, to the sociology of emotions, to affect theory. In part, I have situated my work in this way in order to highlight the ambiguous and vexed quality of how subjectivity has been treated within sociology—and how this dissertation complicates the sociological *subject*. Consider two examples from the classical canon: In his analysis of the commodity fetish, Karl Marx showed how capitalist production collapses labor power into equivalences for market exchange: an objective form of alienation but one with subjective effects. Max Weber described how work (regardless of its content) becomes a virtue for all persons, a rationalization of religious ethics historically, but subjectively disenchanting in everyday life and its institutionalization. For Marx and Weber alike, modern subjects' unique experiences and sensibilities in the economic sphere (i.e., labor) are depersonalized and relegated to the private—which is why contemporary categories like *civil society* and *public sphere* are fundamentally flawed and ultimately ideological.

Probably the most influential theorist of the public sphere, Jurgen Habermas (1962) envisioned a nostalgic-phantasmatic public sphere predicated on an idealized citizen-subject whose existence is disassociated from labor and thus from his/her essential alienation and disenchantment. If for Habermas the efficacy of the democratic bourgeois state was predicated on the existence of a rational public sphere, it should come as no surprise that this public, in his

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[12] My goal is not to reconcile the various and often contradictory theories of affect and emotion but to mobilize a generalized version for my analysis.

account, has gradually been replaced by manufactured publicity, "opinion leaders," and mass media. Habermas's lamentation of the public sphere's supposed demise is somewhat trite given his myopia with regard to the historical material conditions that produce his rational subjects—not just the objective relationship of labor to the labor process, but also the individual and collective subjective experiences of those relationships. Following Marx and Weber, twentieth-century and contemporary critical theory have consistently demonstrated an *aporia* between juridical and cultural discourses of economy, state, self-hood, health, etc., and their (idealized) subject.

My point here is not that the distinction between the public and private is false or nonexistent. Instead, I argue that it relies on a particular understanding of subjectivity in which the definitive relationships of emotion and self-hood to labor and the economic are disavowed. As I show in this dissertation, the irrationalities of emotion and subjective experience are simultaneously barred from and displaced onto "the economy." For example, sociologist Campbell Jones (2011) asks "What Kind of Subject Is the Market?" Drawing on Lacan's psychoanalysis, Jones observes how we have attributed "superhuman" powers to the market—speech, desire, will—as way of articulating our own fundamental desire to know.

Jones's analysis of the market-as-subject places the economy in an interesting position, one that "mirrors" the psychoanalytic subject's desire for wholeness, knowledge, and mastery. This juxtaposition brings to light a key point of this dissertation: As the category of the economy is called into question, so too are the economy's *subjects*, unleashing a kind of structure of feeling or affective atmosphere. And as these economic feelings and moods surface, the once-operative distinctions between private and public, self and economy, begin to blur: How is stagflation felt? Why is burnout zany? Is exuberance material? Can rage be profitable? In Althusser's (2001) formulation, the subject is interpolated (linguistically) by repressive and/or ideological state apparatuses. Building on Althusser, I demonstrate in this dissertation how affects, as Brian Massumi (2002:40) writes, "have ideological effects by non-ideological means."

Economic Situations

Thus far, I have established that *the economy* is a historically specific knowledge formation, public discourse, and tool of governance, one that has surfaced in the United States intensively since the early years of neoliberalism. My other main argument will be that particular *emotional situations* emerge alongside the economy at different points in recent history as a way of giving the economy a kind of intimate coherence, but also as a force that shapes the boundaries of the economic and the non-economic, the self and world, history and everyday life. Before I develop this argument, I want to elaborate three points about the economy in the age of neoliberalism.

First, as Mitchell (2005) has shown, *the economy* congealed as a discrete entity in part as a response to crisis: the crisis of state amidst the end of empire, decolonization, and a new emerging world order following World War II. It is important to emphasize that in the period of neoliberalism in the United States, the economy—whatever its particular, momentary understanding or content might be—always connotes crisis or potential crisis. This is one reason why affects and emotion have such viability and potency here. Second, we must recognize that post-Fordist production increasingly relies on language, communication, and affect as a source of value.[13] According to Swiss economist Christian Marazzi (2011:70) this has entailed, on the one hand, "an increase in disciplinary specialization—a multiplication of research fields whose origin is to be found in the obsession of having to measure and quantify everything." Simultaneously, on the other hand, this triggers a crisis of measurement since the product of the post-Fordist economy is increasingly immaterial. As a result, the boundaries of "the economy" also become more fluid—blurring distinctions between work and leisure and between human and nonhuman labor. Thus, "the economy" could be everything; but if it is everything, it could also be nothing at all. Third, and following the first two points, there is a growing gap between "the economy" and the reality it purports to represent. As Mitchell (2005:140) comments, "The economy, the new object of economics, was constructed out of not only numerical quantifications but an entire process of 'qualification,' branding, product development, information production, and image making that formed both the possibility of the modern economy and *the increasing impossibility of its representation*" (emphasis mine). This notion supports Foucault's thesis in *The Order of Things* (1970): throughout the modern period there is an insurmountable distance between words and things (knowledge and its objects) within the human sciences. In the obscure space between them, Foucault says, lies the *unthought*, an undiscoverable, unknowable aspect of man. Although inaccessible through epistemology or science, the unthought, I argue, can be sensed and felt as affect, as mood, as an emotional situation.

At this point, the links I am attempting to draw between the economy and affect should begin to be apparent. In the age of neoliberalism, "the economy" has become ubiquitous in

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[13] This fact has been well documented. See, for example, Hardt and Negri (2000); Marrazi (2009); Sennett (2007); Bauman (2000).

politics and culture; yet, it is never quite knowable or representable except as crisis. One way that we access "the economy" is through affect—through public moods and structures of feeling. Of course, looking back over the last 40 years, the economy has changed dramatically, its crises are at once generalized and distinct. Indeed, they are episodic. In this sense, I understand "the economy" as a kind of *genre*—including not just the representations by economic science but also the ways the economy surfaces culturally and personally. For Williams (1977:185), genre:

> is neither an ideal type nor a traditional order nor a set of technical rules. It is in the practical and variable combination and even fusion of what are, in abstraction, different levels of the social material process that we have known as genre becomes a new kind of constitutive evidence.

Building on Williams, the editors of a special issue of *Social Text* on "Genres of Neoliberalism" (Elliot and Harkins 2013) take up the notion of *genre* to understand how globalization and neoliberalism occasion new cultural and aesthetic forms. For them, "Genre offers a means of drawing form, formation, and reading protocols together in a fashion that both attends to the process of historical development and allows for attention to emergent and unexpected practices" (Elliot and Harkins 2013:12). Similarly, Lauren Berlant (2011) in *Cruel Optimism* attends to genres that offer up a sense of the world that is at once intensely present but also strangely enigmatic. In particular, she elaborates the notion of *genre situation* to indicate a kind of affective orientation or "animated suspension" toward the uneven, episodic quality of contemporary neoliberal culture and everyday life:

> A situation is a state of things in which something that will perhaps matter is unfolding amid the usual activity of life. It is a state of animated and animating suspension that forces itself on consciousness, that produces a sense of the emergence of something present that may become an event" (Berlant 2011:5).

In this dissertation, I argue that the economy as a genre is situational and episodic; it animates certain kinds of affect and sensibilities while suspending them until the next crisis.

It should come as no surprise then that the relationship between the economy and affect is not one of cause and effect; rather, they are resonant and mutually constitutive. Gilbert Simondon's philosophy of individuation lends insight into how I understand this relationship. For Simondon, *individuation* is the process by which pre-individual capacities and potentials take form and become individuated and individual—individual not just in the sense of the individual human being but in the individual objects, groups, and ideas that make up the totality of the physical, cultural, and psychical world. Thus, being and form are not a priori but processual. Simondon was particularly interested in theorizing what he called the *psychosocial*, that is the simultaneous process of psychic and collective individuation. He contends that the two sides of psychical activity—perception and emotion—can only achieve some sort of unity in the context of collective individuation. On the other hand, the affectivity of psychic individuation puts the subject in relation to others, to the collective. As Simondon states, "the collective, for an individuated being, is the mixed and stable home in which emotions are perceptual points of view, and points of view are possible emotions" (quoted in Combes 2013). Thus, rather than *individual*, Simondon uses the term *transindividual* to trouble sociological understandings of the relation between individual and society, suggesting that both are constituted in a single process of individuation.

Analogous to Simondon's collective and psychic individuation, the economy and the emotional situation bear a similar co-incidence. As I will suggest throughout this dissertation, "the economy" is constantly in flux—adopting new meanings, describing different kinds of activities, and performing ever-changing political functions. The economy is the milieu in which diverse kinds of experiences are individuated into a coherent emotional situation, such as the depression, burnout, exuberance, and rage that I examine in this dissertation. For example, depression might entail feelings of sadness or anxiety, a loss of energy, drug abuse, or inability to work. I argue that these different kinds of experience are individuated into a *mood* where depression now represents something more generalized and collective. As an emotional situation, it is not necessary that everyone feel it; it is not universal. However, this mood situates how we read, understand, and experience the economy. Thus the emotional situation folds back to inform the pre-individual conditions through which the economy (re)emerges. For Simondon, the pre-individual refers to a state of *metastability*,[14] the conditions of possibility that frame how beings and forms take shape. Here, the neoliberal economy is quintessentially metastable—nervously suspended but also excitable and open to dramatic reconfiguration.

Theory-Method

Given the emphasis on the economy as a kind of genre, and the assumption that the distinction between the individual and the social is blurred or even moot, my point of departure in this analysis is hermeneutics, or the method of interpretation. The key figure here is Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) who critiqued the growing trend to make cultural, historical, and psychological interpretation more scientific, in other words, to treat the human sciences as if they were natural sciences. For Gadamer, the decisive and damaging moment in the history of

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[14] Simondon borrows the term *metastability* from the physical sciences; in chemistry and physics, it refers to out-of-equilibrium and/or dualistic states that have yet to take form.

hermeneutics was Kant's refusal to treat aesthetics as a legitimate form of knowledge, thus marginalizing interpretation to matters of taste. Hermeneutics, he argues, is instead universal: everyone is always involved in the practice of interpreting his or her social worlds. The task then is to situate the act of interpretation historically and culturally rather than to ascertain authorial intention or the "correct" interpretation.

While Gadamer emphasizes language and dialogue as the site of hermeneutics, I am interested in interpreting affect and mood in the context of neoliberalism and economic crisis. Certainly, many contemporary thinkers in social science and cultural studies have employed novel methods for understanding feelings, moods, and affects in their larger cultural contexts.[15] In a sense, my analysis of depression, burnout, exuberance, and rage reflects a kind of *affective mapping*. Drawing on Fredric Jameson's concept of *cognitive mapping*, Flatley (2008) develops the notion of *affective mapping*, which he sees as the feelings, emotions, and moods that allow us to live and move about in the social world—be it work, politics, or everyday life. For him, affective maps are most variable in times of social upheaval, for example, during economic crisis. Like Flatley, I do not understand affects or moods to be necessarily lodged in a human subject, but rather free-floating culturally. Thus, my interpretation has required what Gadamer (following Hermann Helmholtz) calls *tact*—a certain sensitivity to both aesthetic and historical situations. As Gadamer (1975:15) tells us, "the tact which functions in the human sciences is not simply a feeling and unconscious, but is at the same time a mode of knowing and a mode of

[15] See, for example, Ann Cvekovitch (2012), Emily Martin (2007), Sianne Ngai (2005), Jackie Orr (2006), and Jasbir Puar (2008).

being.” Thus, my work involves a particular sensitivity to the aesthetics of history as represented in cultural objects including film, television, novels, and video.

Historical interpretation—and especially that of emotional situations—raises questions about the ontology of temporality. Marxist critics such as Stanley Aronowitz (1981) have shown that capitalism’s uneven development is as much a subjective temporal issue as it is a spatial one. In the simplest terms, everyday life varies for different classes and social groups such that experienced time differs fundamentally from universal historical time. However, the study and interpretation of everyday life remains difficult since it is not just one thing, but is rather heterogeneous, evolving, and (in Georg Simmel’s words) *in statu nascendi*. Michael Jacobsen (2009) observes that everyday life might entail a place or the realm of the private, a particular time or rhythm, an attitude or state of consciousness, or certain routinized activities, to name a few. Thus, everyday life is notoriously difficult to define or delimit as an “object” of scholarly inquiry. Nonetheless, the category of everyday life has been of keen interest to sociologists over the last 50 years, from Erving Goffman’s (1959) analysis of performances of the self to Lynn Chancer’s (1992) study of the unconscious sadomasochistic relationships that organize various groups, institutions, and ideology.

My analysis of how the economy and affect surface in the practice of everyday life (to use Michel de Certeau’s phrasing) is not anthropological; in other words, I do not observe individuals’ behavior or inquire as to their feelings. Rather, I am interested in how “the economy” and the emotional situation individuate at certain moments in recent history. In his *Critique of Everyday Life*, Henri Lefebvre (2002) develops the concept of *moment*, which for him is more than just an instant of time: moments are perceived, situated, and distanced in relation to the everyday and to other moments. More generally, *moments* have a kind of duration whereas *instants* are just that, instantaneous. By examining different moments in history, I show how a particular understanding or experience of the economy resonates with a public mood or affect while situating that moment in a larger historical trajectory. Moreover, my attention to moments in history reveals the episodic character of the economy within neoliberalism, highlighting its disjunctive quality.

This disjunctive facet of neoliberal social life has informed my theoretical approach in each of the chapters that follow. Although the dissertation as a whole is guided by Marxian political economy and Foucauldian studies of governmentality, my theoretical arsenal is broad and varied. Throughout the work, I draw on media studies, psychoanalytic theory, literary theory, affect studies, continental philosophy, science and technology studies, and of course sociological theory. More than a hermeneutical tool, I consider theory here to be a vital part of my archive as well. While theory typically functions as an explanatory device, it is also a record of thought itself and, as such, a reflection of the epistemological unconscious of a given cultural and historical moment.[16] I draw on eclectic theoretical sources not only to explain the relationship between "the economy" and affect, but also as a kind of cultural evidencing of the emotional situations under examination. In other words, the kinds of theories that I activate in the chapters that follow say something about the particular affect or emotion under analysis, be it depression, burnout, exuberance, or rage.

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[16] See Derrida (1995) and Clough (2000) for related discussions.

Chapter Descriptions

Each chapter examines a specific economic moment in history alongside a particular affect or mood that captures the emotional situation attendant to it. I look at four economic events: the popularization of the term *stagflation* in the 1970s in the wake of the OPEC embargo, the publicity of Ronald Reagan's national economic plan "Reaganomics", the dot-com boom and bust of the 1990s, and, most recently, mass home foreclosures. I read each of these "economic" events through a particular affective frame: depression, burnout, euphoria, and rage. As with the economic-affective couplings that guide the work conceptually (stagflation-depression, Reaganomics-burnout, dot-com bubble-euphoria, and foreclosure-rage), my research has involved the juxtaposition of many, often disparate, kinds of texts, objects, data, and theories. The result is a unique kind of hermeneutics, one akin to what Berlant (2011) calls a *historical sensorium*. Each chapter represents a single case study of an economic crisis and its emotional situation. Taken together and in sequence, each chapter describes the pre-individual conditions for the following one.

Chapter 1, "Feeling Neoliberalism: Stagflation and Depression in the 1970s," traces how the economy enters public imaginations through the discourse of *stagflation*. Describing economic stagnation coupled with high inflation, stagflation presented a conundrum and challenge to accepted economic doctrine. Indeed, the enigmatic nature of the economy itself demanded new ways of thinking as well as new ways of being in the world. Like stagflation, *depression* came to signify a range of symptoms from intense feelings of sadness and anxiety to a lack of energy to a general sense of ennui. As a sort of personal stagflation, depression represents the subjective experience of an economy in distress, evident in the depressive cinema of the 1970s such as *Five Easy Pieces* and *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. As "the illness of responsibility" (as Alain Ehrenberg (2010) calls it), depression demands self-vigilance and self-knowledge. Similarly, the stagflation economy demanded a kind of economic citizenship that could be cultivated through economic education, such as new programming on PBS aimed at explaining the economy.

While stagflation and depression were nebulous, ill-defined problems, Reaganomics and burnout sought to demarcate them by defining concrete remedies. As I show in Chapter 2, "'Where's the Rest of Me? Reaganomics and Burnout," Reaganomics functioned to congeal "the economy" in public discourse by establishing protocols for treating its sicknesses (unemployment, inflation, stagnation, etc.), protocols that were attached to the zany figure of Reagan himself. Indeed, this zany aesthetic—evident in films like *The Incredible Shrinking Woman*—functioned ideologically and affectively by allowing the disastrous economic policies of Reaganomics to appear not only plausible but legitimate. Reagan's zany economics functioned in part by bracketing the economic, and deradicalizing the growing problem of worker burnout, as with the Professional Air Traffic Controllers' strike in 1981.

Chapter 3, "Exuberance and Waste in San Francisco's Dot-Com Economy," brings us to the "roaring nineties" when optimism and euphoria propelled the booming dot-com economy in San Francisco. In this chapter, I draw on Georges Bataille's (1991) theory of the *general economy* and exuberance to analyze the dot-com speculative frenzy that became synonymous with technological progress and "the economy" itself. I argue that the excesses of the dot-com boom occasioned both "glorious," luxurious exuberance as well as "catastrophic" exuberance. The dot-com bubble in San Francisco expanded a culture of wasteful luxury, with high-end establishments and lavish parties catering to the techie elite. However, this expenditure was linked as well to catastrophe with the passing of Proposition N, which cut off cash payments to homeless persons in order to expand shelters, substance abuse centers, and other “care” services. In this chapter, I aim to supplement our critical vocabularies for analyzing contemporary finance capitalism by reading contemporary behavioral economics and William Gibson’s cyberpunk Bridge trilogy alongside Bataille’s philosophy.

Chapter 4, “Foreclosure and the Politics of Rage,” analyzes a strange phenomenon associated with the recent home foreclosure crisis: In instances of apparent rage, foreclosed homeowners have destroyed their houses—from ripping out moldings and appliances to smearing feces on the walls and carpet. Drawing on the psychoanalytic concept of *foreclosure*, I argue that such rage stems from the foreclosed desire for homeownership. Yet, I also argue that rage must be viewed as a generalized cultural condition brought on by the rupture between the boundaries of inside and outside, private and public, financial and material. Indeed the 2008 foreclosure crisis has inaugurated a kind of *quasi-subjectivity*, one in which individual lives, health, feelings, credit scores, and wealth or poverty are intertwined into a biopolitical matrix. Rather than view this as an aberration, somehow unique to the 2008 crisis, I argue that homeowner rage belies a longer history in which individuals’ inner lives have become entangled in national economic imaginations. In particular, I show how mass homeownership and therapeutic culture are mutually implicated as a key regulatory mechanism within Fordist strategies of accumulation and governance in the postwar period.

In the United States today, the economy and its meanings continue to change and evolve, signaling not only the nation's waning hegemony on the world stage but also the possibilities of new kinds of subjectivities and politics. By way of a short coda, I reflect on the implications of my work and close the dissertation with some thoughts on the present and future.

CHAPTER 1

FEELING NEOLIBERALISM:

Stagflation and Depression in the 1970s

Introduction

Thirty-four years ago, just over a month after the OPEC embargo that began on October 17th, 1973, the *New York Times* published a feature story about the diagnosis, treatment, and increasing prevalence of depression in the United States. Dubbed the "common cold of mental ailments," depression is characterized here as a highly paradoxical phenomenon (Cherry and Cherry 1973). For one, many of those who suffer from it lead outwardly happy and successful lives alongside silent inner turmoil. More problematic is that depression is difficult—if not impossible—to adequately diagnose. The fact that depression manifests individually in so many different ways highlights not only its excessiveness in describing a range of psychic and physical conditions but also the ongoing lack of consensus among the psychiatrists, doctors, and researchers who seek to define it. Since such debates at the time intimate variations of a nature/nurture dichotomy, treatments for depression also fall into some version of psychotherapy or physical therapy, including electroshock and drug treatments. The piece ends with the hopeful prediction that an "efficient," "all-purpose" "miracle cure" may soon emerge, signaling perhaps the "discovery" of fluoxetine in 1970 which would later be marketed as Prozac in 1988.

The *Times* published a similar sort of public educational piece just several months later, subtitled "basic economics for the nation," which was written "as a citizen's guide" to the upcoming economic summit initiated by President Ford (Silk 1974). Along with skyrocketing inflation, high unemployment, and instability in the securities market, the author Leonard Silk identifies the "unprecedented" threat of world depression to be the most "ominous" and serious issue needing attention from the various experts, business, and labor leaders assembled by the president. After summarizing the positions of monetarists (such as Milton Friedman) and fiscalists, Silk argues that there is a pressing need for wholly new approaches to thinking about the economy, ones that do not just trade between inflation and unemployment, or between supply and demand of money, but that recognize the economy as a complex system of interrelated forces. Specifically, he cites increasing criticism of the structural rigidity of current economic policy, which if dismantled might allow for a more flexible and competitive system. Most important to understand, he writes, is that we cannot rely on "old medicine alone"; indeed, "there is reason to hope that by making the economy and its problems the focus of intense public scrutiny, a national television event, the summit could make an important contribution" (Silk 1974).

In addition to being featured as important topics of public interest, several congruencies emerge in consideration of these two pieces from the 1973–1974 period: For example, psychic depression is seen simultaneously as a looming, indiscriminate threat but one difficult to locate due to its conceptual ambiguity—which demands from individuals an ongoing vigilance of one's self, friends, and loved ones. Similarly, the threat of world depression demands active attention to the economy by the cultural consumer-as-citizen; yet as with psychic depression, there is so much ambiguity with regard to how the economy actually operates that identifying the source of the "problem" is constantly subject to debate. In both cases however there is suggestion that new treatments for depression or its onset do not necessitate a comprehensive understanding simply because the brain as well as the economy may just be too complicated to ever fully know. In this sense, the best available *treatment* functions socially and politically as consensus.

The linking of individual depression and depression as a threat to the economy may appear initially as overly literal, coincidental, or fanciful. However I believe that further inquiry into this connection reveals how depression in the 1970s became a cultural and affective principle of an incipient neoliberal governmentality. For one, many critics and analysts cite the early 1970s as a key moment when the existing economic order began to break down. Along with a general recession in production, the abandonment of fixed exchange rates and the OPEC oil embargo rendered old modes of capitalist accumulation increasingly obsolete. "Flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products and patterns of consumption" increasingly became identified as a solution, but only in so far as structural impediments (such as state social services, unionization, etc.) could be dismantled, thus allowing for the proliferation of "flexible accumulation" among the capitalist classes (Harvey 1990, 2005).

According to David Harvey, one vital tactic employed by capitalist classes for the widespread institution of flexible production was to instill a political doctrine of "freedom" that was borrowed selectively and piecemeal from classical political economy and nineteenth-century liberal theory. As the market was "freed" from intervention by inefficient state bureaucracies, individuals – including corporations with the juridical status of individuals—could begin to exercise their personal liberty and freedom of choice in the market. While it is tempting to uphold a notion that such rediscovered freedom merely achieves an economic end, Nikolas Rose (1999) reminds us that freedom must also be seen as a set of practices, devices, and relations of self and self to others—a mode of exercising power and contesting it that surfaces on the terrains of the economy and politics as well as culture and self-making. In addition to the class imperatives outlined by Harvey, Rose argues that the neoliberal version of the "free market" forces all realms of the social to be reconceived along economic lines. For the individual, consideration of health, education, or any "life choice" thus becomes an *economic choice* included in an entrepreneurial calculus for self-realization, which is assumed as the inherent goal of the neoliberal subject.

This chapter traces the affective dimensions of the economic malaise that befell the United States in the 1970s. Stagflation—the condition of economic stagnation coupled with high inflation—appeared to be anomalous, its causes unclear and treatments uncertain. As a kind of personal stagflation, depression represents the *emotional situation* of a society at the cusp of structural and ideological change, one that reverberates in depressive films such as *Five Easy Pieces* and *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. As "the illness of responsibility," depression demanded new attention to the stagflation economy—an imperative to learn how the economy works, or more accurately to learn that the economy is too complicated to ever know and therefore best entrusted to experts.

Diagnosing Stagflation

The economic crises of the early 1970s were unprecedented. The collapse of the Bretton Woods international financial system in 1971 and the OPEC embargo of 1973 signaled that the American system had "overheated" (to use popular jargon of the time). Yet there seemed to be a taboo on the use of terms like *depression* or *slump* even as they loomed heavily, especially among those who remembered the Great Depression. The mood was one of insecurity and resentment, which played out in and ideological war between Keynesians and neoliberals: neither could explain how a stagnated economy could still see such a rapid rise in prices, a situation for which the jargon term *stagflation* had to be invented. But it was the free-marketers who were on the offensive—indeed, the newly invented Nobel Prize in Economics was awarded to Friedrich von Hayek in 1974, and two years later to Milton Friedman (Hobsbawm 1994).

Although different economists are credited with its invention,[17] *stagflation* is a portmanteau word meant to describe economic *stag*nation coupled with high in*flation*, a condition thought to be impossible according to the economic doctrine that higher prices only accompany an economy that is expanding.[18] Nonetheless, stagflation described much more than its name suggests; indeed, it became a depository and reference point for any number of economic (as well as political, social, and cultural) concerns. According to historian Wyatt Wells (2003), the "Great Stagflation" of the 1970s occurred because Americans demanded more of their economy than it could provide. He attributes stagflation to a number of causes: For one, the demographics of the labor market as a whole were shifting, with increased numbers of baby boomers, women, and immigrants in the workplace. He also contends that Americans' work

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[17] Paul Samuelson popularized the term in 1974, but the term appears in the *New York Times* as early as 1971.

[18] While he never utilized the term, John Maynard Keynes theorized the possibility of a stagnant economy with increasing prices in his 1919 pamphlet, "The Economic Consequences of the Peace." In it, he argued that the harsh penalties directed toward Germany by the Treaty of Versailles would force it to become a heavy borrower and a net importer, thus driving up prices, discouraging production, and rendering Europe as a whole overly sensitive to shifts in demand, declines in American lending, or any unexpected economic change. More generally, Keynes believed that even the most robust (capitalist) economy would eventually sink into stagnation without proper governmental policy and intervention.

ethic had fundamentally changed—that people had come to expect more for less. Other factors such as a rise in oil prices, a drop in investment, and increasing environmental regulation contributed to a slow economy. Most importantly for him, the techniques of mass production pioneered in the auto industry and applied to everything from fast food to construction had reached their limit. In all of his explanations, Wells implicitly suggests that people had become complacent, uncreative, and lazy.

Many economists' views were equally reactionary and conservative: Mancur Olson (1982) argues that Keynes' macroeconomic theory does not adequately address microlevel questions of behavior and decision making. In particular, he asserts that "involuntary unemployment" can occur even when decisions are rational and informed, and that other workers (i.e., labor unions) are the primary cause of involuntary unemployment: they have an interest in keeping their own wages high by blocking what would otherwise be a mutually beneficial transaction between employer and potential worker. Similarly, Martin Weitzman (1984) scapegoats labor. For him, the economic problem of stagflation is rooted in microlevel behaviors—in particular the paying of wages based on a cost-of-living index. He argues that the wage system should be transformed into a share system, where pay reflects the relative success of the firm. In order to "vaccinate" capitalism against stagflation, a share system would increase aggregate demand without increasing prices—a benefit that would be felt by the community as a whole.

Of course there was hardly consensus among economists: Howard Sherman (1976:xi) adopts a radical approach; for him "[t]o be a radical economist means, roughly, to look critically at our present economic institutions, including big business and the politicians 'owned' by big business." Sherman notes that most traditional economists consider economic downturns to be caused by high wages. Whereas conservative economists cite Say's Law to argue that the unemployed just are not trying hard enough or want more wages than they deserve, Sherman emphasizes that the fallouts of unemployment and inflation are felt most by working people since inflation reduces real wages. In fact, inflationary periods always involve a massive upward distribution—as capitalists raise their prices more quickly than they increase worker's wages in order to maintain or grow their profit margin. And contrary to conservative arguments, there is no evidence that labor unions cause inflation (1976: 161), since, again, prices tend to go up faster than wages. From this standpoint, the immediate goals for addressing stagflation would include full employment legislation, nationalization of the oil industry, and free health care. However in the long run, only socialism can eliminate stagflation forever.

These various and competing explanations of stagflation had immediate implications for policy making. Although the Great Depression was still being analyzed and interpreted, Keynesianism had become the accepted doctrine for dealing with economic slumps. Unfortunately, Keynesianism had an inflationary bias since any sign of recession would entail an expansionary countermeasure.[19] With the onset of stagflation in the 1970s, it was clear that standard macroeconomic policies were no longer sufficient: a tighter monetary-fiscal policy might curb inflation but it would increase unemployment; on the other hand, if money supply were to be increased as an expansionary countermeasure, then inflation would only be

[19] In other words, if the economy showed signs of recession, the state would intervene through monetary and fiscal policy to keep unemployment below its "natural" level, thus increasing wages and prices.

accelerated. While explanations for and antidotes to stagflation vary among economists, it is striking to note the extent to which a medical model enters the discourse. For example, in his book *Our Stagflation Malaise,* economist Sidney Weintraub (1981) uses the following to describe stagflation: “affliction” (xiii), “wound” (xiv), “jitters” (xiv), “economic madness” (1), “scar” (3), “ailment” (3), “malady” (3), “malaise” (3), “distress” (3), “cancer” (9), “hardening of the arteries” (11), “prophylaxis” (19), “congenital dread” (31), and “inflation virus” (59).

The metaphor of the economy as a body lends insight into the ways in which stagflation functioned to define the domain of “the economic.” In her analysis of medicine’s “ontological practices,” Annemarie Mol (2002) argues that the body is not one but multiple, an object that is enacted in different practices (description, diagnosis, cause, treatment, ability, disability, economy, etc.), and through competing and often contradictory discursive formations. Crucial to her account is the difference between *illness* (a normative interpretation of a diseased body by the patient) and *disease* (the object of biomedicine that lies within the body but is proliferated discursively outside the body). Like the body of medical science, the economy—the sick economy—is multiple. The economy is experienced differently by different people; it is *enacted* by events ranging from the oil embargo, to a presidential election, to an individual’s unemployment. Stagflation is the economic disease invented by economists and experts to describe a range of phenomenon while bracketing the scope of “the economic.” Yet as I have shown above, the economic analysis of stagflation involves different sets of problems and solutions depending on the perspective taken. But stagflation is not just a disease; it is also an *illness* that is felt in everyday life, a trope that circulates culturally, especially (as we will see) as a kind of depression.

The Emotional Situation

One of the significant insights of Emile Durkheim's sociological classic *Suicide* (1897) was to demonstrate how even the most seemingly personal and individual of decisions—the decision to take one's own life—can be explained at the level of the social. Suicide is not merely a personal affliction, he argues, but oftentimes an outcome of anomie, a kind of social depression brought on by overdeveloped division of labor and lack of grounding institutions. Indeed, a concern around depression occupies many of the early sociologists: Georg Simmel wrote of the blasé attitude of city dwellers; Max Weber predicted widespread disenchantment as every sphere of life becomes rationalized and bureaucratized; and, of course, Karl Marx described the alienation inextricable from capitalist wage labor, a subjective feeling concurrent with the objective losses of workers.

If depression is a ubiquitous characteristic of modernity as argued by the "classical" sociological theorists, then the question at hand is to assess what is unique about it in the 1970s. Certainly, as the *Times* article from 1974 by Cherry and Cherry suggests, depression began to be diagnosed at unprecedented rates, becoming "the common cold of mental ailments." One explanation is that everyone was already depressed but just did not know it. For example, Australian psychiatrist Gordon Parker (2007) has long argued that depression is overdiagnosed, citing his 1978 study of depression among teachers where 95% reported feelings of depression. "It's normal to feel depressed," Parker says.[20] Even if depression among individuals is normal,

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[20] A recent *Times* article reports that depression continues to be overdiagnosed, as indicated in prescriptions for antidepressants, stating that one in ten Americans currently take antidepressants

an obvious question remains: Why has depression become normal and ubiquitous? What are the social and cultural conditions that allow it to be so normal? In his thorough, National Book Award-winning history of depression, Andrew Solomon's (2001:31–32) explanation for increasingly widespread depression echoes the early sociologists' concerns about modernity:

> The pace of life, the technological chaos of it, the alienation of people from one another, the breakdown of the traditional family structures, the loneliness that is endemic, the failure of systems of belief (religious, moral, political social—anything that seemed once to give meaning and direction to life) have been catastrophic.

My goal in this chapter is not to account for the increasing numbers of depressed people (although that is significant) nor is it to discount depression as an invention of the psychiatric establishment and pharmaceutical companies (although there is some truth to that perspective too). Rather I want to think about depression as a psychic and cultural analog to stagflation, and argue that depression represents the *emotional situation* of the 1970s. Recall that for Paolo Virno, the *emotional situation* refers to pervasive feelings emergent in multiple contexts, the ubiquitous tonality of sentiments that connect work, leisure, and politics in addition to individual feelings (see Virno 1996, 2004). I discuss depression as a sort of mood or affective atmosphere attendant to stagflation. In his preface to Bifo Berardi's work on depression, *The Soul at Work*, Jason Smith (2009:10) reminds us that "[c]apitalism is the mobilization of a pathos and *the organization of a mood*; its subject, a field of desire, a point of inflexion for an impersonal affect that circulates like a rumor" (emphasis mine). Thus, my concern is simultaneously one of psychology *and* of political economy.

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and that middle-aged women in their forties and fifties and the elderly are mostly likely to be misdiagnosed (Rabin 2013).

As the mood of American capitalism in the 1970s—the stagflation economy—depression indicates a burgeoning relation of the worker not only to his labor but to “the economy.” The breakdown of Fordism as the dominant mode of accumulation is significant here. Borrowing from the psychoanalytic parlance of Melanie Klein,[21] Fordism depends on fundamentally paranoid-schizoid social arrangements. The division between work and nonwork—be it leisure or unemployment—is strictly intact: smooth production and a steady job are idealized as “good” while the threat of unemployment or any unpredictable economic condition become sources of persecutory anxiety for both labor and capital. Differentiated roles within bureaucratic institutions mediate between the private and public in order to maintain function. On the other hand, post-Fordism could be seen as a perverse form of the depressive position—perverse in that differentiated social spheres do not reintegrate so much as they implode. The boundary between work and nonwork disappears: a good job is potentially a bad (or nonexistent) one, just as not working can be as productive as working. Similarly, capital does not require smooth, predictable production to extract a surplus, but rather thrives on flexible accumulation, the ability to cater to rapidly changing and individuated tastes, and even to take advantage of risk and unpredictability in financial markets.[22] The effect according to Virno is that what characterized Marx’s “industrial reserve army”—the fluid, latent, or stagnant unemployed—now characterizes all of employed labor. In other words, what used to distinguish the unemployed is now what typifies

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[21] In Melanie Klein’s psychoanalytic theory, the infant unconsciously splits the desired object (the breast) into good and bad as a means of defending oneself psychically from the pain for one’s own destructive wishes. The child’s reconciliation of the object with reality entails a form of depression or depressive anxiety where the infant is now able to feel guilt.

[22] See Martin (2007) for a discussion of financial capital and risk.

employment in post-Fordism: flexibility, movement, change. Thus, Virno (2004:103) says, the qualitative or substantial difference between labor-time and nonlabor-time begins to disappear: "labor and non-labor develop an identical form of productivity, based on the exercise of generic human faculties: language, memory, sociability, ethical and aesthetic inclinations, the capacity for abstraction and learning." Paradoxically, then, working endlessly or working less (or even not at all) can be equally justified.

Following this line of thought from the Italian autonomist theorists, Franco Berardi (2009:207) argues that contemporary capitalism involves "the interweaving and interacting of psychological flows and economic processes." Berardi interrogates how the post-Fordist creation of value—increasingly deriving surplus from labor's intellectual and affective faculties—result in psychopathology, most especially as depression. Berardi builds on Marx's concept of alienation: the more energy the worker invests in productive activity, the more s/he buttresses the power of capital. For Marx, this objective loss takes the form of commodities that are circulated back to the worker for consumption. In post-Fordist capitalism, however, labor becomes increasingly "abstract," entailing "the distribution of value-producing time regardless of its quality, with no relation to the specific and concrete utility that the produced objects might have" (Berardi 2009:75). In emphasizing cognitive, affective, and information labor, Berardi does not claim that knowledge workers are not alienated in the same way that industrial workers are. What's different is that such labor is becoming "infinitely flexible, it can be assembled and disassembled, and that it is precisely in this dismantling identification that we can find both its desire and anxiety" (Berardi 2009:87). By involving the anxieties and desires of the worker in the production process—and its ever-increasing speeds—workers suffer a unique kind of mental and emotional exhaustion that is depression.

While depression certainly describes a range of tangible psychic problems, I also understand it as a cultural idiom that was emergent in the 1970s and is certainly still with us today. As the contemporary mental problem par excellence, depression according to Alain Ehrenberg (2010) represents the illness of responsibility, one in which self-realization is impossible or just exhausting. Departing from previous understandings that frame depression as an individual pathology (such as an overattachment to loss, a learned dysfunction, or a chemical imbalance), Ehrenberg situates depression as an inner conflict around the possibilities posed within both contemporary liberalism and democracy. As the individual struggles between what is possible and impossible, self-motivation and initiative become the norm for participation in social life, the ability to move among and between the realms of the private and public. Depression, however, represents either an inability to navigate permitted possibilities or a paralysis where nothing is possible, both expressed as sadness and fatigue, a sort of individual "stagflation."

Ehrenberg claims that the demands on the individual made by society at large become instituted into what he calls a "grammar of internal life." This grammar must also be seen as part of the *language* that Rose says makes governing possible, that is, all of the knowledges or regimes of truth that shape self and society. In particular, the concept of freedom circulates in this language of governance and is made intelligible "as freedom of individual right, freedom of employment, freedom of expression, freedom of consumption" (Rose 1999:3). In addition to knowledge, I believe that the category of culture—including lifestyle and identity, education, and cultural objects—may also be included as part of the language of governance in so far as culture represents, speaks, persuades, or even coerces.

Depressive Cinema

The 1970s is often seen as the heyday of New Hollywood Cinema (see King 2002). Influenced by the counterculture and social upheavals of the 60s and 70s, New Hollywood Cinema broke from conventional styles and themes, often focusing on antiheroes or the darker side of American culture. New Hollywood films were characteristically ambivalent and open-ended, often resisting narrative closure. An exemplar of the New Hollywood, *Five Easy Pieces* (1970) presents an affecting portrait of unhappiness and dissatisfaction. Robert Dupea toils daily in the Southern California oil fields, escaping the drudgery of his life with booze and womanizing. We soon discover however that Dupea hails from a family of classical musicians in Washington State and that he too was once a promising young pianist. When Dupea learns of his father's impending death and decides to visit him, the film unfolds as a series of contrasts between his two lives. His working-class world of manual labor, bowling allies, and loose women diverges starkly with the bourgeois, intellectual life of his family. He is ashamed of his sweet but ditsy waitress girlfriend Rayette after becoming enamored with his brother's fiancé, the sensitive and sophisticated Catherine. Most saliently, the deafening noise of traffic jams, industrial equipment, crying babies, and blasting televisions—as well as the twang of Tammy Wynette songs—fade away into classical music and the quiet serenity of the family's pastoral estate. After visiting his father one last time, Dupea hitches a ride with a trucker to Alaska, abruptly leaving behind his car, his clothes, his girlfriend Rayette, and the rest of his life.

Although it appeared several years before the end of the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, or the economic recession precipitated by the OPEC embargo, *Five Easy Pieces* captures what Virno calls the *emotional situation* of its era. What is striking most about Dupea's depression in the film is that it is not predicated on loss or lack; he has no external constraints consigned by the state or market. Rather, his life is characterized by a surfeit of possibilities: the option to reject love, opportunity, or stability in favor of constant movement. Dupea's malaise stems from his desire for individuation but also from the very openness and flexibility that he is afforded to realize himself. While he possesses the capacity and freedom for self-actualization, he finds himself only suffocated and confused by it. Consider the famous diner scene that has become iconic in American cinema for its portrait of youthful rebellion: Robert Dupea wants a side order of toast with his omelet, violating the "No Substitutions" rule clearly stated on the menu. The waitress, unwavering, reminds him that she does not make the rules and that he will have to choose from the menu. Frustrated that she will not oblige what seems to be a rather ordinary request, Dupea maneuvers around the rule by ordering a sandwich on toast, requesting that she omit everything except the toast. Astonished, she asks him what to do with the omitted chicken, to which he replies, "Hold it between your legs!" Furious, the waitress asks Dupea and his friends to leave since they have violated yet another rule forbidding unruly behavior posted clearly on a sign above the counter. In a violent tantrum, Dupea sweeps the table of its dishes and silverware and they leave the diner.

The diner scene is remembered most often as symbolizing the 1960s revolt against the arbitrary rules and injustices of the older generation. While evocative of that social imagination, I argue that it presents a society at the cusp of upheavals that manifest less as social protest so much as affective vicissitudes. For example, in arguing with the waitress over the toast, Dupea assumes that he is entitled to his specific choices in life at his whim, ones that cannot be delivered within the micro-economy of the diner. Dupea is not rebellious so much as he is sarcastic, frustrated, cynical, angry, and finally disappointed, sentiments he expresses largely by verbally bullying and humiliating the waitress. But of course, his effort is feeble and the conflict is not resolved. He doesn't get his toast.

While *stagflation* emerged in the 1970s to describe a particular economic malaise, the term was politicized not only to explain why the economy was flailing but also to mobilize numerous courses of action. In economics and politics, *stagflation* doubles as a diagnostic and as an open container for marking multiple events. It signifies impending crisis but also becomes the political alert for such crisis, accumulating compounded meanings as its own event unfolds. More generally, stagflation is simultaneous activity and paralysis. Read through the character of Robert Dupea, stagflation could be utilized here to think about a kind of unhappiness, depression, and dissatisfaction that is characterized by indeterminacy and excess. Dupea is not depressed about any one thing, but, rather, becomes depressed by living.

Developing this thought around the affective components of stagflation has important political implications. It is worth noting here, though, that one of the primary ways that the set of policies and production practices identified with neoliberalism and post-Fordism have come into place is through the work of private think tanks and academic economists who were successfully able to bracket the economy into a relatively discrete, technologizable category. Critics such as Lisa Duggan (2004) demonstrate that a significant consequence of this has been to impart authority to specialized experts for addressing what appear to be the technical (rather than political, social, or cultural) issues of economic life. What's more, she points out, is that left-oriented politics often reproduces this notion of the autonomous economy by battling internally over the universalism of economic inequality versus the particularities of gender, race, and sex. Even as perceptive a critic as Harvey (2005) participates in this dead-end discourse by going so far as to suggest that identity movements "narcissistically" contributed to neoliberal hegemony by obscuring in the 1970s and 1980s the "real" reconfigurations that were taking place around class. By opening up for consideration and analysis the affective currents that link up production, emergent knowledge formations (in fields like economics), and lived history, I hope to integrate explicitly the economic and the cultural so that we can further understand—and demystify—the important social transformations that have taken place since the 1970s and that continue to trouble us today. It is in this context that I am employing the term *stagflation*.

As a concept and an event, stagflation connects the material and the affective. For example, economists theorize that stagflation occurs when a "supply shock" of a vital resource drives up the cost of production, in turn slowing output and raising the overall price of goods. Of course in the period of the 1970s, the October 1973 OPEC embargo "bottlenecked"—as economists say—the supply of oil. Importantly, images of oil bookend *Five Easy Pieces*, which opens with drills and pumps in the oil fields, and closes with a final, lingering shot of the gas station where Rayette has been abandoned as Dupea heads to the "final frontier" of Alaska. And while Dupea's reality is consistently framed by oil in some way (at work in the fields or in traffic and on the road), the significance of oil as a source of energy—especially one that is imminently exhaustible—points to how vitality, vigor, inertia, fatigue, or replenishment become affective dimensions of stagflation. In a key scene toward the end of the film, Dupea confesses to his dying father:

> I don't know if you'd be particularly interested in hearing anything about me, my life doesn't add up to anything much to the kind of life you would approve of. . . . I move around a lot. Not because I'm looking for anything really, but because I'm getting away from things that get bad if I stay. Auspicious beginnings, you know what I mean?

Dupea understands that his life is about stopping and starting up again, depletion and ignition, a kind of stunted-ness that is paradoxically exemplified in movement. Dupea's father, however, doesn't exactly approve or disapprove here since multiple strokes have rendered him incapable of speech. It is an entirely one-sided conversation.

Although he perceives his life as so very difficult and trying, the other people in Robert Dupea's life—his buddy Billy, Rayette, his brother, Catherine—view his series of "auspicious beginnings" as merely "easy choices" for him, ones in which the consequences of his action (or inaction, as it may be) seem negligible. He is, after all, a virtuoso, just one who refuses to perform. Yet for him, this virtuosity—this capacity to perform—is also a source of his depression, a reminder that he is not performing, or, only successfully in bowling, cards, and ping pong. For Virno (2004:52), virtuosity is a key category for understanding the post-Fordist *emotional situation*; he describes it as "an activity which finds its own fulfillment in itself," but one "requiring the presence of others." In other words, virtuosos need an audience because there is no specific end product of their performances. As the ability to perform—an ability that is indeterminate—virtuosity becomes the individual (and collective) capabilities that refuse or exceed constraints like stagflation, both as an abstract economic condition and an individually lived feeling.

Virno uses the term *virtuosity* to characterize the nature of flexible and immaterial labor, but also to suggest how sentiments themselves are put to work. In *Five Easy Pieces*, Dupea's depression represents an ongoing labor in which he must occupy and move around between multiple, often divergent roles: the blue collar Joe, the classical pianist, the good son, the boyfriend, the brother. Significantly, this virtuosic labor happens in the film as a series of interactions with and often abuse of women. For example, his girlfriend Rayette gives him love and concern, returned by him with sarcastic remarks, infidelity, hiding her away in a motel room while he visits his family, and ultimately abandonment. As she says to him, "I am not a piece of crap but you treat me like a wife." In later scenes, the young, lesbian hitchhikers who rant about the filth and vulgarity of modern existence admire Dupea for his rebellious behavior at the diner, but again he only dismisses their views on life and even their approval of him. His sister Partita attempts to reconnect Robert with the family but he only seems to resent that fact that she has succeeded in becoming a recording pianist, failing to recognize that she is clearly overworked, frazzled, a little unstable, and the object of scorn to her more successful brothers. Indeed she is accused more than once by them of "penis envy." At the same time Dupea inserts himself into her private life, disapproving of her sexual relationship with their father's male caretaker, a relationship he sees as "sadistic." He also falls in love with his brother's fiancé, Catherine, who tries to understand why he doesn't play the piano anymore. When he does play for her, she compliments his performance, yet, again, he rejects the compliment by noting that he merely chose the easiest piece he could play. Later, he chastises her for surrounding herself with mean, unreliable people like his family, a clear projection of his own feelings about the family and himself.

Virno (1996:33, emphasis his) writes: “Opportunism, cynicism, and fear define a contemporary emotional situation marked by abandonment to finitude and a *belonging to uprooting*, by resignation, servitude, and eager acquiescence. At the same time, they make that situation visible as an irreversible fact on whose basis conflict and revolt might also be conceived.” As an embodiment of the emotional situation of the 1970s, Robert Dupea embraces an existence of constant “uprootedness,” a kind of individual stagflation marked by the capacity for activity within “a life that doesn’t add up to much.” Dupea performs his virtuosity through navigating women, suggesting perhaps how the economic crisis in the 1970s staged a reassertion of (white) male privilege, in this case reasserted affectively. Dupea’s depression “makes visible” the series of auspicious beginnings past thresholds of no return, the impossibility of going back. Rather than lack, his depression signifies a refusal within a social milieu where affects increasingly connect the cultural and the economic, and make political the lived-ness of the everyday.

In my reading of *Five Easy Pieces* and its protagonist Robert Dupea, I have made some references to Dupea’s ambivalence. In its psychoanalytic formulation, *ambivalence* of course refers to the simultaneous and inseparable merging of opposites stemming from the ego’s originary process of narcissistic auto-cathexis of the life drive onto itself. As the drive is later directed to an external object by the ego, “the transformation of the ‘content’ of the instinct into its opposite” results in the ambivalence of simultaneous loving and hating, a process Freud (1963:95–97) believes organizes numerous spheres of psychic and social life for the subject (e.g., life/death, internal/external, desire/reason).[23] Further, Freud argues that ambivalence is a driving force behind social progress. In his narration of the primal horde, the brothers hate the father but also love him and later feel remorse for killing him.[24] This guilt serves a repressive function within the psyche in the form of the superego, but "consequently it is very conceivable that the sense of guilt produced by civilization is not perceived as such either, and remains to a large extent unconscious, or appears as a sort of *malaise*, a dissatisfaction, for which people seek motivations" (Freud [1929] 1961:99). For Ropert Dupea, ambivalence dominates his life throughout the film, as he wavers between Rayette and Catherine, between playing the piano and working in the oil fields, between his sense of class entitlement and his belief in equality, etc. Ambivalence also serves the repressive function of assuaging Dupea's unconscious guilt for abandoning his father, his class privilege, and "talent," a guilt manifest as individual malaise and dissatisfaction.

The classical formulation of ambivalence is a useful interpretative tool here. I would like to advance another understanding of ambivalence that does not operate as just a binary simultaneity (e.g., love/hate, life/death, conscious/unconscious). Returning to Virno, the ambivalence that he calls "the ambivalence of disenchantment" is inherent in the post-Fordist emotional situation. It describes not only an affective simultaneity (such as opposition and hope, cynicism and fear), but also suggests a politics of time, what he calls the "irreversibility" of the emotional situation: a constant, pressing mutation of the "here and now" (Virno 1996). In the

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[23] Note that I am using "drive" (*trieb*) and "instinct" interchangeably.

[24] Laid out first in *Totem and Taboo* (1952) and extended here in *Civilization and Its Discontents* ([1929] 1961).

economy, for example, stagflation does not just "happen" and then get fixed; it accumulates symptoms and triggers a multiplicity of discourses, ultimately transforming the economy itself—and, indeed, even what is meant by "the economy."[25] Similarly, in *Five Easy Pieces*, Robert Dupea's journey never culminates or concludes in personal self-realization, it remains open. Thus, by merging a portrait of negative affects such as depression, malaise, and dissatisfaction with a technical, politicized, economic concept like *stagflation*, I hope to make evident the ambivalence of the emotional situation of the early 1970s, an ambivalence that is, as Virno (1996:32) writes, "open to radically conflicting developments."[26]

Ambivalence and depression permeate 1970s cinema. Consider Alice Hyatt (played by Ellen Burstyn) in Martin Scorsese's 1974 film *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. Long gone from her idyllic childhood in Monterey, California, as shown in the opening scene—an orange-saturated homage to Dorothy in Kansas—Alice now lives in Socorro, New Mexico, with an unappreciative, verbally abusive husband and their precocious son, Tommy. When her husband suddenly dies in a car accident, Alice decides to leave her boring but comfortable life and relocate back to Monterey where she had had a brief but successful stint as a lounge singer. En

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[25] That stagflation is a portmanteau word is not insignificant here. The word *portmanteau* as used to indicate a blending of two heterogeneous words first appeared in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* and was later examined by Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze (1990:47) observes that portmanteau words are more than mere blends of two or more words, but are also *disjunctive* blends, and as such "perform an infinite ramification of coexisting series." For him, portmanteau words have a unique capacity to accumulate meaning. Thus *stagflation* does not merely describe simultaneous stagnation and inflation, but contains and triggers potentially infinite meanings. In this sense, stagflation could be seen as *ambivalent* in Virno's usage.

[26] It is important to note that Virno does not idealize negative sentiments as radical political potentials. Indeed, he emphasizes that negative sentiments often become part of the system, de-politicized, even being made productive for capital.

route, Alice and Tommy stop in Phoenix so that Alice may make some money for the remainder of their trip; after a shaky start, she lands work singing at a bar. However, discovering that the job pays very little—and that her younger, smooth-talking, new boyfriend is married and physically abusive—Alice and Tommy head down to Tucson where she takes a waitressing job at a greasy-spoon diner next to their motel. Initially very humbling for her, Alice soon finds camaraderie in her coworkers as well as a handsome, stable, new boyfriend, David (who is a local farmer). However, Alice remains uncertain and unable to make any decision around her career, her boyfriend, her son Tommy, or her plan to return to Monterey—culminating in a fight with David after he spanks Tommy. When David declares that he is willing to give up his farm and follow her to Monterey, Alice ultimately decides to settle in Tucson since she can be a singer anywhere, after all, and Tommy has grown to like it there as well. The film closes with Alice and Tommy walking along a commercial road toward a tacky hotel lounge called 'Monterey,' undoubtedly signifying her newly adjusted Oz.

Unlike Dorothy's trip down the yellow brick road, though, Alice's journey through the American southwest is not one of benign, phantasmal adventure but rather a series of losses and humiliations. In Socorro, she loses her husband, her house, her best friend, and the implied stability. Living out of motels and toiling at joints becomes a constant source of shame, the loss of her dreams and a self-ideal constantly deferred. Alice oscillates between perky optimism and grief, frustration and anger, sarcasm and honesty, which indicate most her deep ambivalence about what do with her life. On the one hand, there is the possibility of a happiness and success back in Monterey; alternately she finds herself met with the realities of an unforgiving job market, raising a son with paltry resources, and the desire for companionship. Even by the end of the film, Alice confesses to her coworker, Flo, that despite what she had always thought, she really cannot live without a man after all and that she really has no idea what to do with herself. Throughout the film—even before her husband dies—Alice's conflict is represented as a binary decision of living either with or without a man. It later becomes apparent that Tommy, with his adult language and uncanny (but also undisciplined) maturity, functions and has functioned as a surrogate companion. Flo advises, "Honey, you gotta figure out what you want, and once you know—jump in there with both feet and let the devil take the hindmost." And of course, we are led to believe that Alice chooses to stay in Tuscon with David who, though imperfect, is a decent man with an established life.

In her analysis of self-help books, Micki McGee (2005) finds that such texts addressed to women in the 1970s emphasized two ideals: avoidance of "codependence" with men while also imagining one's self as living a creative adventure. In reality however, such ideals were rarely efficacious as women's entry into the workforce seemed only to impoverish them. As McGee (2005:82) states, "the harder women worked at 'having it all,' the greater their losses were becoming." Indeed, symbolic of the 1970s woman who "wants it all," Alice becomes increasingly poor in the course of her "adventure," ultimately abandoning it in favor of a man and stability.[27] However, the possibility of pursuing her dream of being a lounge singer remains open in the end, though only in the shoddy simulacrum of Monterey. It would seem then that

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[27] Like the "Alice" referenced in Teresa De Lauretis' *Alice Doesn't* (1984:vii), Alice signifies more than just a single character but also "the unqualified opposition of feminism to existing social relations, its refusal of given dominations and cultural values; and at the same time to affirm the political and personal ties of shared experience that join women in the movement and are the condition of feminist work, theory and practice."

Alice's ambivalence is one that trades between "man and career," and one which throughout the film demands from her a constant flexibility and adjustability that is capable of mediating, if temporarily, the ups and downs of her material and emotional life.

The title of the film suggests, too, another kind of ambivalence that I am interested in exploring. The ambiguity of "here" and "anymore" in the statement "Alice doesn't live here anymore" could allude to Socorro, New Mexico as easily as it could to Monterey for the unspecified speaker referencing "Alice" in the third person. Socorro is never really Alice's home but her husband's, representing all the trappings of a mediocre, unfulfilling marriage. As she puts it "Socorro sucks!" and indeed, Tommy goes so far as to say that "The whole state is shit!" On the other hand, as her boyfriend David reminds her several times, Alice's life in Monterey was a very long time ago and perhaps just an idealization of a childhood home. Alice is neither here nor there; she is in-between, she is liminal, or, as Virno might say, she "belongs to uprooting." Such a belonging is irreversible: there is no going back, no going *home*. Yet at the same time this uprooting presents new social possibilities. By the end of the film, Alice does find belonging with her diner coworkers and customers, relationships that were subsequently developed for eight seasons in the popular television series, "Alice." She also finds love with a man who respects and admires her, a departure from the string of selfish and abusive men she had previously encountered. Because of this, she is able to be a "better" mother to Tommy in so far as she does not burden him with her own problems. While I do not want to suggest that the conclusion to Alice's "journey" is not a conservative one—after all, she remains a waitress in order to stay in Tucson with her man—I think it is important to recognize how ambivalence here functions not just as an either/or, both/and emotional ambiguity, but as social potential.

This potential is fundamentally political too since the individual-becoming is also the multitude-becoming. For Virno, the multitude represents a political entity of individuals, a collective conceptually opposed to the homogeneity implied by the liberalist concept of *the people*. The process of individuation (individual-becoming) then is precisely the making of the multitude as a network of singularities and differences rather than a unified, cohesive whole. Yet, the process of individuation is always incomplete, it never concludes. Rather, the "subject" emerges in the entangled space between pre-individual (bodily, linguistic, perceptive) capacities and their ongoing and indeterminate individuation. The subject's performance of her capacities and faculties *is* virtuosity, "an activity which finds its own fulfillment in itself" but one "requiring the presence of others" (Virno 2004:52). Language especially is "without end product" and thus "every utterance is a virtuosic performance" since "utterance is connected (directly or indirectly) to the presence of others" (Virno 2004:55). Language—and vulgar, foul-mouthed language in particular—plays a special role in *Alice*.[28] The opening scene of Alice as a little girl in Monterrey is a picture-perfect scene of nostalgia, that is, until she tells the audience that anyone who would interfere with her dream of becoming a singer can "blow it out their ass!" Tommy's overly adult, smart-aleck language is a constant frustration for Alice: he mouths off to his father and her boyfriends; he rebels against her attempts at tempering his obnoxious speech;

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[28] Just as Alice navigates the linguistic games, and the sense and nonsense of her adventures in Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice Hyatt must traverse the confusing, often hostile journey to fashion a new life after her husband dies. As De Laurentis (1984:3) observes, "language . . . is more than a game. The argument begun by feminism is not only an academic debate on logic and rhetoric . . . [it] is also a confrontation, a struggle, a political intervention in institutions and in the practices of everyday life." Alice Hyatt's virtuosity stems directly from this confrontation with the realities of her everyday life.

but most embarrassingly he is a conspicuous reflection of her own foul mouth. Alice initially avoids Flo, too, whose loud, sexualized vulgarities repel Alice (perhaps because Flo's coarseness reminds Alice of her own downward mobility); yet Flo's potty-mouth ultimately draws in Alice, and the two become close friends. Alice affirms to Flo, "Boy, you really need someone to talk to," even if it is, as suggested, with "foul language." Such foul language for Alice does not signify any one sentiment—it may alternately reflect anger, nervousness, happiness, sadness, shame, or even all at once—but it is consistently a way of relating with others, a way of becoming. Indeed, foul language here presses the limits of signification, the point where virtuosity *becomes* affect. As Virno (2004: 78) says, following French philosopher Gilbert Simondon, "the relation between the pre-individual and individuated is, in fact, mediated by feelings." In other words, feelings, passions, and affects connect the subject to political, social, and cultural world-making. In light of this, ambivalence for Alice does not just represent opposing internal sentiments but is, also, the very performance of virtuosity: the development, modification, and realization of ever-changing capacities that connect and mediate self and the world.

Governing the Economy/Governing the Self

In 1964, the American Economic Association created a new action-oriented "Committee on Economic Education," noting that only 10%–20% of all "future citizen-voters" will ever take a college-level economics course (Bach and Saunders 1965). One particular goal of the committee was to institute economics into general high school curriculum, which culminated in the establishment of DEEP (Developmental Economic Education Program). DEEP sought to address the "deficiency" of high school economic education by establishing protocols for training economics teachers and metrics for assessing student progress (Mather 1969). High school economics expanded significantly during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1970, DEEP began to develop a number of games and simulations as a way of enhancing students' interest in the subject, a way to "capture the imagination and enthusiasm" of these soon-to-be citizen-voters (Lewis et al. 1974). Later during the economic crises of the 1970s, it became apparent that television was crucial for teaching economics and relating concepts to current events (Television and Economics 1978). Teachers were encouraged to require students to watch the evening news and PBS programming in order to make concepts such as scarcity, unemployment, and inflation relevant and timely.

While cinema and films like *Five Easy Pieces* and *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* embodied the era's depressive emotional situation through representation, television became the ideal medium for neoliberal governance and self-management. While pastoral care and Machiavellian politics sought total control over populations and territory (respectively), liberal institutions aimed to govern by developing populations that could be "captured" statistically around several key demographic measures. Similarly, television sponsors and programmers invested copious time and money into market research—not just into demographics but also opinions and tastes—relying on the belief that desired audiences would naturally self-select. This fact exposes a basic failure of liberalism: the framing of ideal political and economic populations necessarily involves exclusion. For example, in mapping television audiences there are always individuals and entities that escape population capture, for whatever reason. Perhaps, for example, the population lacks a unifying distinction or perhaps targeted members were ineffectively interpolated. The ideological efficacy of liberalism also lies in this exclusion: those excluded can easily appear to be whiney, irrelevant, dangerous, but above all *nonparticipatory*. In the contemporary (neoliberal) context, this contradiction resurfaces: Single mothers are irresponsible for working two jobs rather than staying home to mother, but are public burdens if they do not. Young black men should not appear to be mischievous, and if they do they are subject to "stop and frisk" policing, or, worse, being gunned down. Consumers who purchase homes at variable rates or overspend on credit cards are irresponsible economic liabilities, not the banks who invested in them (see Graeber 2012).

Economic education was hardly unique to the 1970s, nor was its scope always devoted solely to national economies. Yet the economic education of the 1970s promoted a particular kind of subjectivity, one where proper citizenship and concern for the national economy became inextricably linked. In order to understand this unique relationship, I turn to the precursor of economic education: home economics. In her history of home economics in American culture, Megan J. Elias (2008) demonstrates that home economics was much more than the "dead-end" junior high school class we know today, but was rather a social movement that sought to rationalize (in the Weberian sense) the domestic sphere and, in doing so, legitimate women's contributions to society. In the context of this chapter, the *oikos* in home economics—the micro-economy of the household—is analogous to the national economy that high school economics and public television programming aimed to explain and publicize. As Akseli Virtanen (2004:211–12) rightly points out, the *oikos* "is *political economy* in the original sense of the syntagma: economy understood as government and government understood as economy" (emphasis his).

While domestic manuals for wives and mothers had existed in the 18th and early 19th centuries, most women learned how to cook and raise children from their mothers or other relatives. It was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that the domestic sphere began to be the object of academic and political concern, beginning with the publication of *The American Woman's Home* in 1869 by Catherine Beecher, sister of famous novelist and abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe. In it, Beecher argues that the home should be run like a business and that women should view themselves as professionals. By 1899, Melvil Dewey (founder of the Dewey decimal system) led the first home economics conference in Lake Placid, New York, with the goal of expanding home economics as a legitimate science in university curriculum and as a progressive movement aligned with other forward-thinking movements of the early twentieth century. By the middle of the century, home economics had become an established discipline in universities, addressing a broad range of topics from nutrition to child psychology to home architecture. Much like Taylorism in the factory, the objective was to teach students (i.e., women) how to optimize every aspect of domestic life through the application of managerial science. The field emerged not without contradictions. In universities, many doubted whether home economics could be rigorous enough to be considered an academic field in its own right; on the other hand, a home economics curriculum that was too abstract or scientific would cease to be practical. This issue belied a more fundamental contradiction: home economists declared that individual women should see their homes as little laboratories of which they would be the ultimate experts; yet if every woman was to be an authority over their own domestic lives, how would home economics as a discipline maintain its own authority without resort to other kinds of expertise? As Elias (2008:79) aptly puts it, "Because home economists styled themselves as experts in a field that was supposed to have no experts—a field in which each woman was supposed by her very nature to be adept—they often seemed to overturn the only authority ever granted to women."

Home economics was also the target of critique. Sexist university administrators complained that home economics was merely a pretentious claim to academic status of what should be basic female skills. As such, it was just a quaint major for potential wives, which was the real reason women went to college anyway—to find a good husband. The feminist critique was not dissimilar, arguing that women needed a broad education and that home economics steered women into marriage and household labor. Most famously in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Freidan blamed marriage education for limiting women's aspirations and self-worth, inevitably chaining them to oppressive households. Elias argues that both critiques ignored the real goals of home economics. For one, home economics brought together insights from multiple disciplines, and thus offered a very broad education in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Furthermore, home economics was meant not to shackle but liberate women, as he insisted: "women must seize control of all forces and elements having to do with domestic space and activities" (Elias2008:143). After all, their goal was not just to elevate women's status but also the domain of household labor itself, a domain disparaged by the patriarchal university and feminists alike. Many Marxian social theorists, from Henri Lefebvre to Sylvia Federici, have argued that revolutionary politics must begin with the transformation of everyday life, the quotidian practices that constitute our basic day-to-day reproduction.

Economic education in the 1970s mirrors the evolution of home economics in important ways. From its inception, home economics addressed numerous, disparate topics including food preparation and nutrition, sewing and textile manufacture, child rearing and family psychology, home finance, bacteriology and sanitation, arts and crafts, design and architecture. Home economics was deliberately designed to be flexible and able to address the rapidly changing needs of twentieth-century households. Similarly, economic education in the 1970s would need to address multiple topics in order to explain the crisis that had befallen the nation: not just the laws of supply and demand or the nature of the business cycle, but also the sources of inflation and unemployment, the workings of currency exchange, tariffs, and embargos, the subtleties of international diplomacy, the psychology of economic actors, and the role of government in shaping markets. As a result, the public would also concern itself with how "extra-economic" events affected the economy, the Watergate scandal or the Iranian revolution for example. This points to a more important similarity: the authority of home economists was most salient in times of crisis—during World Wars I and II and during the Great Depression. Elias (2008:63) writes, "the new authority that home economists had created for themselves became most visible . . . in times of crisis when they could emphasize the life-and-death aspects of their field." Likewise, economists and economic education garnered more attention and had greater impact after the OPEC embargo and subsequent spike in gas prices.

In spite of its ambitious and successful beginning as a movement, home economics became enmeshed in the 1950s and 1960s with consumer capitalism. Home economists' authority was relegated to opinion pieces in women's magazines and the endorsement of household products, setting the stage for the proliferation of television experts like Martha Stewart and the establishment of entire media empires with programming designed around home improvement, cooking, family relationships, and all aspects of domestic life. While general economic education had begun to enter high schools in the late 1960s, television was almost instantly viewed as the ideal way to cultivate the nation's interest in and to direct attention to the economy in crisis in the 1970s.

Television scholar Anna McCarthy (2010) argues that TV has long been a key tool in neoliberal governance, locating its paradigm and intellectual seeds in the 1950s. According to her, the postwar period necessitated new notions of citizenship as Cold War fears, class unrest, and racial conflicts began to dominate national discourse. This new citizen required training: s/he needed to learn the rights and responsibilities attendant to the brave new world of the United States' global dominance. Thus, citizen-talk galvanized elites from numerous sectors (including big business, social reform, philanthropy, the university, labor, and the media itself) who were interested in addressing and influencing large audiences but without any hint of propaganda or state totalitarianism. Although generally considered a debased cultural medium, television was the ideal tool for indirect persuasion and diverse modes of address—and one that was (importantly) autonomous from government itself. Thus, corporations, labor unions, philanthropic organizations, etc. could address the consumer-citizen while avoiding accusations of ideological bias. By offering up cultural goods for general consumption, these various organizations appeared to demonstrate good will, even benevolence, toward their publics. The cultural outputs of this emerging "citizen machine" (as McCarthy aptly calls 1950s TV) were inevitably contradictory, for example touting the importance of freedom even as freedom was under attack by fears of communism; promoting American civic superiority even as racial inequality was overtly contested; and, most importantly here, advancing an ideal of economic citizenship where corporations, consumers, and labor act within tacit boundaries of good will and reciprocity, thereby securing (seemingly) mutual goals of wealth and wellbeing.

McCarthy draws on Michel Foucault's theories of governmentality to understand television as part of a larger apparatus (*dispositif*) of governance. Rather than disciplinary surveillance, television in the 1950s became seen as a technology that could foster appropriate conduct in multiple social milieus. Although their specific agendas differed, elites from numerous sectors mobilized the idea of *freedom* as a means of promoting voluntary self-rule on the part of the audience-as-citizenry. Indeed for Foucault, freedom does not exist a priori as something that must be protected, but rather is something that is produced strategically by liberal governance: "[L]iberalism, the liberal art of government, is forced to determine the precise extent to which and up to what point individual interest, that is to say, individual interests insofar as they are different and possibly opposed to each other, constitute a danger for the interest of all" (Birth 2008:65). In short, liberal governmentality aims to transpose market logics onto political ones. If the state can secure the conditions for proper markets—to ensure their natural function—then it can also stage the conditions for "the people" to self-rule without top-down measures by a repressive state. This is not to say that the American state has not relied on global military bullying and domestic policing to advance its economic and political ends. Rather, the liberal discourse of freedom insulated American publics from these ugly truths, and not through state propaganda. As McCarthy (2010:35) demonstrates, the positioning of "television audiences as both receptacles and originators of opinion" allowed entities like the Dupont Corporation and the Ford Foundation to establish a relationship with audiences based on seeming reciprocity, on ethics rather than ideology.

Economic education was a primary goal of many corporate-sponsored programs in the 1950s that were intended to promote capitalism and big business (Bird 1999). For example, Goodyear Tire and Rubber produced *A Letter from America*, a short television program which depicts an immigrant rubber worker from Russia who writes a letter to his family back in the Soviet Union. The immigrant describes his life of freedoms and relative affluence, both results of the beneficent Goodyear Company and American capitalism. Similarly, *The Birthright* from the Chrysler Corporation portrays a young Chrysler engineer writing a letter to his newborn son. Through a series of vignettes and flashbacks all punctuated with Chrysler products, the engineer urges his son to be "discontent"—not in a radical way but in such a way as to promote creativity and innovation which are the hallmarks of American capitalism. Following Shane Vogel's (2012) analysis of similar programming by US Steel, the Chrysler and Goodyear programs could be thought of as what he calls "performances of biopower," a logic of consumer citizenship where audiences are invited to align household prosperity with national prosperity, and corporate benevolence with the American way of life.

By the 1970s television programming had become thoroughly commercialized and apparently "lowbrow." Even TV news was sensational and aimed at garnering large audiences rather than offering the public useful information. Television seemed no longer to be the "citizen machine" that it had been in the 1950s, offering little to assist public understanding of the economic crises of the 1970s, that is, except the "oasis" of public television. Founded in the 1970, the Public Broadcasting Service grew out of the remnants of Education Television (ETV) of the 1950s. PBS was seen as a corrective to the wasteland of commercial television, offering up quality, intelligent programming that would not only cater to the tastes of educated people (white men) but also provide a public service through educational and uplift programming (Oullette 2002). Indeed programs such as *Sesame Street* were conceived as a means of alleviating inequality by delivering educational programming that would appeal to the disadvantaged and middle classes alike. In her cultural history of PBS, Laurie Oullette (2002:16) summarizes well PBS's raison d'etre:

> In the United States, public television was positioned to mobilize *and* reform the imagined public, activate *and* guide the citizenry, enlighten *and* classify TV viewers according to unquestioned hierarchies of knowledge and power. The people were asked what they might like to see on public television, for their judgments and behaviors were implicitly held responsible for the very "TV problem" that public broadcasting was created to solve. Across policy, institutional, and cultural contexts, public television was envisioned *for* the people, not *by* the people, because its democratic potential was perpetually contingent on their transformation as subjects.

Thus, PBS aimed to enhance the cultural capital of its audiences, even as its hypothetical viewers were those who already had it. This contradiction would play out in debates over public funding: Were tax payers merely subsidizing the tastes of high-minded elites, or did PBS offer a legitimately *public* good? The question was somewhat moot since most of PBS's "prestige" programming like *Masterpiece Theater* was underwritten by one or two corporate sponsors.

Nonetheless, PBS's objective of delivering uplifting television is perhaps most evident in its news and public affairs programming. According to Oullette, such programming aimed to address the viewer as citizen. Whereas consumer culture and commercial television promoted selfishness, PBS aspired to cultivate and guide good citizenship through informative, nonsensational programs. Somewhat paradoxically, this goal was achieved by relying on experts who could guide consensus while appearing detached and civil. Their aesthetic was subdued, scholarly, and earnest. The ideal viewer was white, educated, and male, who would then act as opinion leaders among their own families and communities where cultural citizenship would have a “trickle-down” effect. In some senses, audiences were positioned not to become good citizens but to mimic good citizenship through the act of viewing and devoting attention to national problems, like stagflation.

The exemplar here is *The Robert MacNeil Report* (later called *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report*, *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*, and today the *PBS NewsHour*). Launched on October 10th, 1975 amidst renewed talk of stagflation,[29] *The Robert MacNeil Report* was offered up as a sober and professional complement to network newscasts that had long been criticized for their flimsy, headline-oriented coverage of current events. According to one TV critic: “Designed to be the entrée after the 7 o’clock network news each weeknight, the program examines the complexities of a single controversial issue in the news with three or four guests representing different opinions” (Hennesee 1976:D25). The program’s signature was a back-and-forth analysis by Robert MacNeil in New York and Jim Lehrer in Washington as they introduced various experts and viewpoints. Indeed Robert MacNeil himself was the embodiment of objectivity and balance: he was “a Canadian Francophile whose ancestors fought on both sides of the American Civil War” (Hennessee 1976:D25) with a long career in print and broadcast journalism. Two weeks after *The Robert MacNeil Report* debuted, a *New York Times* critic declared that “The staff and Mr. MacNeil are restoring a giant measure of richly deserved prestige to the old TV concept of ‘talking heads’” (O’Connor 1975:63)

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[29] For example, the following headlines ran within one month in the *New York Times*: “A Return to Stagflation?” (August 10); “Back to Stagflation…” (August 17); and “Still Stagflation” (September 7).

One implicit goal of *The Robert MacNeil Report* was to bring attention to the stagflation economy, to reveal its complexities and inner workings from multiple perspectives. The show's very first episode featured an analysis of New York City's fiscal crisis, bringing together viewpoints of a labor leader, a US Senator, and various experts (O'Connor 1975). Another early episode tackled the issue of unemployment, allowing four out-of-work people to tell their stories followed by commentary from two Congressmen (Hennessee 1976). Most critics agreed that the program was a beneficial learning tool for all, and indeed all episodes of the show were indexed and summarized on microfilm for use by libraries, schools, corporations, and research centers in 1979.[30] In an analysis of *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report*'s programming in the roughly two-and-a-half-year period between 1976 and 1978, I found that the economy or topics related to the economy comprised roughly 40% of its featured stories.[31] The program did feature topics of international politics (such as the war in Rhodesia, arms agreements), of cultural importance (the impact of the movie *Roots* on both white and black viewers, how the elderly are portrayed on TV, the Jonestown massacre), and of quaint interest (the history of the American turkey). However, the featured story was most usually about national politics and/or the economy, including familiar economic topics: welfare reform, labor strikes, credit crunches, closing factories, deregulation, taxes, and inflation. Occasionally, more paranoid economic topics were

[30] "'MacNeil/Lehrer Report' Indexed and Summarized," *New York Times*, July 16, 1979.

[31] A note on method: Because of the way "The MacNeil/Lehrer Report" is indexed (with multiple cross-listings of topics and guests), I determined this figure by counting the number of references to the economy out of total topics on 15 randomly selected pages of the index. Throwing out the high and low, the percentage of total references to the economy hovered near 40%.

taken up: the effect of inflation on children, the surge of Japanese electronics in American homes, and widespread corruption among unions and government workers.

As Oullette observes, public affairs programming on PBS justified itself by the notion that it was developing "social capital" and "good citizens," even as it tended to focus on a very particular audience. For example, on *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report*, the economy tended to be framed in terms of its complexity; any understanding of it required the exchange of expert opinions, which were typically left unresolved as to appear objective and unbiased. The effects of this framing are both ideological and affective. It eschews the roles of elites in shaping the economy—setting interest rates, buying and trading stocks, writing tax code, etc.—which is not surprising given that Exxon Corporation was a major sponsor of *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report* throughout the 1970s (McDowell 1978). From the viewers' perspective, the frame highlights that fact they are only spectators to the economy—subject to its complex ups and downs as touted by experts, but not participants. This sense of being stalled, of confusion and powerlessness describes a certain kind of depression that characterizes the era.

PBS's commitment to economic education in the age of stagflation culminated in its airing of Milton Friedman's 10-part series "Free to Choose," starting in January 1980.[32] The format of the series was not unlike *The McNeil/Lehrer Report*: each hour-long episode investigated a particular aspect of the economy (how the market works, the role of government, the Great Depression, welfare, racial and gender inequality, education, consumer protection, worker health and protection, etc.), beginning with Friedman's explanation and followed by a

[32] Although it did not air until 1980, the program was in the works since the late 1970s.

discussion with leading experts and opposing viewpoints. The series was popular with critics and viewers alike, and was followed by a best-selling book of the same name and cowritten with his wife, Rose Friedman. *New York Times* TV critic John O'Connor (1981) described Friedman as "persuasive" and "donnish," and the series to be especially relevant given "today's headlines." Most importantly here, O'Connor lauded the series' even-handedness in presenting all viewpoints: "Nobody wins or loses in the give and take of the discussion. Impressive points are scored on all sides. In the end, the viewer should be left with a valuable sense of the *sheer complexity* of the subject" (emphasis mine). Yet in spite of this touted "complexity" of the economy, Friedman's message is abundantly simple: Whether in labor markets, social services, or a clean environment, private enterprise and the free market (with minimal or no government intervention) will always deliver the optimal result. Of course, the very deep irony that "Free to Choose" aired on PBS and would not likely have ever been made for commercial television seems to be lost on Friedman.

At once very simple and very complex, the economy as presented by "Free to Choose" is a subject in which every citizen should be well-versed even as it remains debatable in the domain of experts. Set in the library at the University of Chicago with a small audience of what appeared to be graduate students, the discussion section at the end of each episode always included a different collection of scholars (for instance Frances Fox Piven of CUNY, a youthful Thomas Soelle), labor and business leaders (e.g., Richard Beason of the electrical workers union, Helen Hughes of the World Bank), and government leaders (e.g., Donald Rumsfeld). On the surface, the debates appear to be lively and in the spirit of good-faith intellectual exchange—presenting contrasting positions for the viewer to assess. In fact, the discussion typically positions Friedman as a heroic maverick who must defend himself from the shrill attacks of his guests or to allow them to quibble amongst themselves as he watches with amusement. (Rarely are questions taken from the audience.) “Free to Choose” is Friedman’s show after all, and the majority of each episode is devoted to his explanations of the economy. And to be sure, he fashions himself as the ultimate expert: filmed around the world and in locations as diverse as a factory in Hong Kong, the New York stock exchange, the Treasury Department, a public school in a crumbling ghetto, and a village in India (to name just a few), Friedman’s narrative of the economy is incontrovertible in its seamlessness. Every aspect of economic life seems to be addressed. Friedman explains some the principles of Econ 101—supply and demand, wages and prices, business cycles—but most of the program emphasizes the power of the free market and the “human tragedy” of big government. For example, Friedman shows how the government “business” of public schools is ripping off parents and selling students short. A voucher system, he says, would restore choice to the parents and their children as the customers while ensuring excellence on the part of teachers and schools as the providers of a service. Indeed, most government interventions in the market are based on “good intentions”; nonetheless, the market always does a better job. Take for example the Food and Drug Administration—designed initially to protect consumers—but its behemoth bureaucracy and lengthy review process now keep new (potentially life-saving) drugs from entering the market. Friedman offers dozens of similar examples: the harm of unions, environmental regulations, and welfare for the poor. As a piece of ideology, Friedman nimbly equates economic freedom and individual freedom—that only the market can provide the freedom of choice. As a whole, “Free to Choose” as a series functions as an instrument of neoliberal governance by bringing attention to the economy and advancing economic education as a prerequisite for proper citizenship.

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Although discounted by political scientists and economists, the theory of “electoral business cycles” suggests that the incumbent president manipulates the economy (in expansionary ways) in order to assure re-election. Of course, neither Ford nor Carter could solve the nation’s economic woes, and neither was re-elected. According to Gerald Epstein (1982:144), “Jimmy Carter’s inability to find a solution to stagflation virtually eliminated his reelection chances.” As we will see in the next chapter, Ronald Reagan manipulated the economic crisis to institute radical new policies, and in doing so, activated new understandings of the economy itself. And while depression did not disappear, it morphed—like stagflation—into burnout: a burnt-out economy and a burnt-out self.

CHAPTER 2

“WHERE’S THE REST OF ME?” BURNOUT AND REAGANOMICS

Introduction

Marcia D. works at a suicide prevention center in California. Her job is emotionally draining and requires a great deal of dedication. As with other social workers, Marcia probably got involved in such work because of her commitment to helping people. However, in her particular job at the suicide prevention center, Marcia finds that most incoming calls are from clients referred to as “chronics,” those who call frequently—sometimes every day for weeks—but are not seriously considering suicide. Marcia’s experience is not unusual: many workers at the prevention center invest copious time and energy in so-called chronics only to discover that they have been calling for years. Obviously this is frustrating for social workers who enter the profession with high levels of idealism. Marcia reflects:

> Sometimes I catch myself thinking, “I wish a real suicide call would come in, so I could use my skills and handle it successfully. It would be an exciting challenge, not like all this tedious, humdrum stuff.” And then I think, “My God, what am I saying? I *want* someone to try and commit suicide? Just so I can be a hero?” It’s awful, but sometimes I feel like that.[33]

Marcia is at risk of burning out. She already exhibits several telltale symptoms of burnout: cynicism, boredom, depersonalization. In clinical and social psychology, the term *burnout* was introduced in 1974 to describe a kind of physical, emotional, and cognitive exhaustion among individuals who perform “people work” such as teachers, nurses, and social

[33] Retold and condensed from Maslach (1982:24).

workers like Marcia. By 1981, the First National Conference on Burnout was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, bringing clinicians, scholars, and business leaders together with the goal of defining protocols for the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of burned-out workers. A fundamental goal of the conference was to actually define burnout. The possibility that it did not really exist or that it was merely a subcategory of other well-documented conditions like depression loomed over many of the conference discussions. The symptomology of burnout seemed to be so excessive and so disparate that there was difficulty locating any definitive pattern or consensus. Definitional problems notwithstanding, burnout was consistently viewed as a growing problem, one with significant psychological and economic costs, and requiring serious attention. According to the conference proceedings, "the First National Conference on Burnout is unusual in that it is deliberately designed to . . . attract wider audiences interested in using the knowledge developed through research, theory, and post applications" (Paine1981:viii).

The increased instances of individual burnout and the subsequent demand for wider-ranging attention to it and intervention signal a larger historical significance. Clearly, burnout indicates a paradoxical problem with regard to labor: it is an inability to work due precisely to an overinvestment in it, what leading burnout researcher Christina Maslach (1982) calls "the cost of caring." Because people-work demands tremendous dedication and energy, those who give too much to their work, who fail to establish an equilibrium between work and nonwork, risk reaching a breaking point beyond which coping is no longer possible, a total psychic and corporeal depletion.[34] Yet Maslach insists that burnout be viewed not as an individual flaw or defect, but as a situational phenomenon where organizational settings frame the likelihood (or not) of employee burnout. Nonetheless, the persistent displacement of structural failure onto individual failure has been a triumph of neoliberal ideology. In this context, I suggest that burnout foregrounds the *emotional situation* of this particular historical moment of the early 1980s. For Virno (2004:84), the emotional situation refers "not to a cluster of psychological tendencies, but to ways of being and feeling so pervasive that they end up being common to the most diverse contexts of experience." Indeed, burnout brings to light a range of affective but also social, political, and economic crises emergent in the early 1980s—not only the burnout of labor but also the burnout of capital, natural resources, ideological legitimacy, and global empire.

In this chapter, I argue that burnout in the early 1980s became an increasingly pervasive clinical condition, just as it functioned as a metaphor for how "the economy" was imagined, understood, and experienced. In particular, I examine how "Reaganomics"—the economic recovery plan devised by President Ronald Reagan and his administration—represented not only a shift in policy but also served to anchor a public imagination of "the economy" as something cohesive, knowable, and, above all, fixable. As with clinicians' definition of burnout, the

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[34] I use the terms *labor* and *work* interchangeably here. Thus, I make no philosophical or categorical distinction between labor and work, as Hannah Arendt does in *The Human Condition* (1958), arguing that labor and work differ qualitatively as activity and in their objects: labor is biological necessity whereas work is thoughtful and human. For Arendt, the distinction between labor and work is also one between base, private needs and higher capacities for sociality and politics. Arendt refuses to recognize that the activity and objects of production can never be divorced from the inherent and historically specific *social relations of production*. In the context of this dissertation, I bring attention to this issue to reiterate the argument that "private" problems like burnout can resonate at the level of the national economy and vice versa.

understanding of the economy (qua Reaganomics) relied on a logic of syndrome and protocol: By defining the economy as a set of symptoms—as a kind of *syndrome*—the complex historical and social forces inherent in this moment of American capitalism are collapsed into simplistic orthodoxies, circumventing reference to culture, politics, or social relationships in favor of technical solutions. Yet, as Reaganomics performed the rhetorical task of congealing “the economy” as a bracketed category in public imaginations, I argue that the first enacted instance of Reaganomics was in fact the dissolution of the Professional Air Traffic Controller Organization (PATCO) in August of 1981. Reagan’s union-busting efforts marked a turning point in labor relations and for unions; it also brought the problem of worker burnout to the national spotlight. Thus, while burnout represented a new and growing psychiatric problem in the early 1980s, it also indexes how discourses of “fixing the economy” became a powerful governmental tool, a way of framing what counts as legitimately “economic,” and a way of undermining labor in the name of an abstraction.

The title of this chapter “Where’s the Rest of Me” is a line from the film *King’s Row* (1942), in which Reagan plays a man who falls in love with a doctor’s daughter against the doctor’s wishes. In a melodramatic turn of events, Reagan’s character loses his legs in an accident orchestrated by the doctor. Reagan later repurposed the line “Where’s the Rest of Me” as the title of his autobiography, meant to suggest that his own life had been lacking before he entered politics. As with his own persona (and as we will see with Reaganomics too), Reagan often blurred fantasy and reality as a way of capturing audiences/voters and obscuring facts. In this chapter, “Where’s the Rest of Me” also connotes some of the symptoms of burnout syndrome—a profound sense of lack—as well as the burned-out economy. The title of the chapter is also meant to be zany. As one of late capital's primary aesthetic categories, *zany*, according to Sianne Ngai (2012), entails slippages between roles and occupations, performances that are affectively intense but also ambiguous in that their effects can range from the humorous to the ominous. Reagan's performances were nothing if not zany. But as I shall argue, the zany aesthetic reframes burnout by transforming its seriousness into silliness.

"The Cost of Caring"

By 1982, the number of professional and academic references to "burnout" had more than tripled since the term's introduction in 1974 (Paine 1982). What exactly this discursive explosion around burnout signified was unclear; it was unclear in fact that burnout even existed. On the one hand, many of the individual symptoms mimicked those of depression or occupational stress. On the other hand, there appeared to be a strong social component to the documented cases, but again, it was unclear if these "external" factors were situational—associated with a particular organization or occupation—or if they were part of a larger phenomenon. Whiton Paine (1982:4) aptly describes this definitional paradox around burnout: "It is everything, therefore it is nothing." Nevertheless, burnout soon came to be considered a legitimate individual and social problem as the professional debates shifted from issues of definition to those of diagnosis and treatment, and its economic costs, including lowered productivity, efficiency, and quality of work; absenteeism; and high employee turnover. Because of these palpable concerns, the study of burnout adopted epidemiological models for identifying and diagnosing "at-risk" populations and for implementing tested programs for successful intervention (and prevention) at the macrolevel.

According to Ayla Pines and Elliot Aronson (1981:9) “Burnout is formally defined and subjectively experienced as a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotional demanding,” namely work. Symptoms may range from the physical (fatigue, headaches, ulcers, weight gain or loss, muscle pain); to the behavioral (substance abuse, propensity for risk taking and violence); to the emotional (depression, paranoia, martyrdom, anger); to relationship issues (isolation, anger); to overall value shifts (grandiosity, cynicism, boredom, distrust, hopelessness, righteousness). Burnout is most prevalent in occupations that involve working with other people and especially those entered into with a high degree of idealism and motivation such as teaching, nursing, law enforcement, and social work. Burnout also appears to be more prevalent among people who work in large organizations and among women. And while different people devise various coping strategies to continue working, extreme burnout can ultimately lead to a “breaking point” beyond which coping is no longer possible.

Not all psychologists who studied burnout approached the problem from a purely instrumental stance. Maslach, one of the most influential and prolific scientists in the field, understood burnout as a fundamentally social phenomenon. She argued that as the family and communities have broken down in American society, the care and treatment of personal problems (from health to education to public safety) has become overly reliant on large, impersonal institutions, and the burden of care has been transferred to “helping professionals” (1982). When such professionals “burnout,” they adopt techniques of detachment through which they increasingly deal with their clients in an objective, analytical manner free of emotional involvement or sympathy. Similarly, Pines and Aronson (1989:11) contend that “the root cause of burnout lies in our existential need to believe that our lives are meaningful, that the things we do are useful, important, and even 'heroic'." Burnout occurs when work ceases to be meaningful.

The emphasis on work's meaningfulness throughout the literature on burnout points to its existential, quasi-religious character and origins. The term was borrowed and takes inspiration from Graham Greene's (1960) novel *A Burnt-Out Case* in which Querry, a world-famous architect, abandons his life of wealth and fame to work anonymously at a leper colony in Africa. Querry has become indifferent to his work as an architect and celebrity, and seeks meaning by helping those who suffer. Inevitably his true identity is discovered, and he is asked by Father Joseph to design a hospital for treating leprosy, one that will bank on Querry's celebrity to bring attention to their cause. Even more, Father Joseph advises Querry: "I would like to build a place where the mutilated can learn to work—occupational therapy, I suppose they call it at home" (Greene 1960:126). As with Querry's burned-out psychic mutilation, relearning how to work is as an essential treatment for the physical mutilation of the lepers.

By the time burnout began to be codified in social and organizational psychology, most researchers focused on immediate causes and treatment. Yet, questions of the social persisted. Social psychologist Michael Lauderdale (1981:163) states:

> While most of the literature about burnout, and stress and job satisfaction as well, focuses on the work place, the job, and the organization as the important points of consideration for lessening burnout, it is my contention that such efforts are restricted only to the most proximate factors that produce burnout. There are often factors, more distant and yet more powerful and pervasive, that account for the proximate causes—expectations that exceed what is achieved.

Drawing loosely on Thomas Kuhn's concept of *paradigm shift*, Lauderdale argues that burnout signals that the technocratic work "paradigm" (then, the early 1980s) was no longer working: Big bureaucracies have widened the gap between work expectations and real experiences. Our varied and divergent roles in life—especially for women—are becoming dispersed and unmanageable. For Lauderdale, one "cure" for burnout would be to embrace what he saw as the emergent paradigm in which one's own self becomes the dominant anchoring institution and entrepreneurship thrives within free markets as new communication technologies unshackle us from the constrictions of space and time. Lauderdale saw this new paradigm as emergent on the West Coast of the US, where New Age spiritualism and technological innovation were equally welcomed. In this new paradigm, individuals could flourish through personal journey just as new technology would render big bureaucracies obsolete. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, the euphoria and exuberance attendant to this vision of self and economy would indeed prosper on the West Coast, but with disastrous consequences.

The sociological perspective is far more useful here than Lauderdale's narrow understanding of a paradigm shift that mobilizes no historical sensibility.[35] For example, the similarities of *burnout* to Emile Durkheim's concept of *anomie* are striking. For Durkheim, anomie is a sociopsychological condition in which the individual lacks meaningful social connections. Anomie results in large part due to the unmediated, overdevelopment of the division of labor. More generally, Durkheim and other early sociologists identified negative psychological effects as stemming from new institutions and social relationships concomitant with modern, rationalized capitalism, such as alienation (Marx), bureaucracy (Weber), money economy (Simmel), and overdeveloped division of labor (Durkheim). Unlike anomie however, burnout might better be seen as a condition stemming from underdeveloped division of labor, in

[35] The one exception for Lauderdale seems to be his persistent and reactionary view of feminism and women's increased entrance into the workplace as a disruptive force.

so far as "helping professionals" lack institutional support for coping and thus bear the full burden of other people's needs or suffering. Of course, burnout emerged in the United States in a very different milieu vis-a-vis the trajectory of capitalism than that of Durkheim's nineteenth-century France. By 1981, the managed economy of embedded liberalism that had prevailed since WWII no longer produced the same levels of profit and growth. Newly "freed" global markets made commodity production cheaper abroad, particularly as labor and energy costs soared domestically.[36]

In this context then, the invention and institutionalization of "burnout" in the 1970s and 1980s could be seen as an ideological strategy for extracting the maximum surplus from labor at a moment of crisis, here through a coercive therapeutic/medical apparatus. Following this line of thought also allows us to treat anomie and burnout as different historical iterations of similar phenomena; both of which provide what philosopher Ian Hacking (1998) in his study of wandering "illness" calls a *release*, that is an outlet for expressing collective sentiments otherwise inexpressible in available languages and institutions. Certainly, burnout should be seen as ideological and as a historically specific "release"; however, here I want to explore the work it does for bringing attention to "the economy," not only through individual experiences and self-understandings but also as a sort of collective mood. I argue that burnout registers the emotional situation of the early 1980s, and as such it characterizes "the economy" in-formation during Ronald Reagan's first term as president. As I emphasize throughout this dissertation, the

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[36] See chapter 1 for descriptions of the immediate historical context.

emotional situation is manifest in disparate fields, from personal experience, to popular culture, to policy.

The Burnout Syndrome

Consider the 1981 science fiction-comedy *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* that follows the comic misadventures of Pat Kramer (played by Lily Tomlin) as her body slowly begins to shrink in size. At first, Pat's problem appears to be a strange anomaly; however it soon becomes clear that Pat's condition is quite serious and irreversible as she becomes smaller and smaller: soon the size of her young children, then the size of a toy robot, then the size of a needle. Pat loses control of her household as her children run wild and her husband Vance is torn between his husbandly devotion and his work as advertising executive promoting the very products that triggered Pat's shrinking disorder. Domestic life continues to disintegrate: Concepcion, the Kramers' Latina maid, begins to wear makeup and dress more sexily as she takes on the role of household matriarch. Pat soon becomes a neighborhood freak show and later a national sensation, appearing on a television talk show and the cover of *Time* magazine. Meanwhile, scientists at the mysterious Organization for World Management plot to develop a bioweapon from Pat's blood that might be used to shrink entire populations. In a series of comic misunderstandings, Pat is believed to be dead after slipping down the garbage disposal in the kitchen sink but in fact is kidnapped by the evil scientists. After being rescued by a drunken lab attendant and a gorilla, Pat returns to her neighborhood supermarket to warn the public of the imminent danger and toxicity of everyday household products before she shrinks into oblivion.

The Incredible Shrinking Woman is an apt (if overly literal) portrayal of burnout syndrome. In *The Incredible Shrinking Woman*, Pat Kramer's demanding, nerve-wracking life as a good mom, wife, neighbor, and consumer propel her to a breaking point of burnout—not in the clinical sense—but in a metaphorical one: her body withers away as more and more demands are made of her, a total corporeal burnout. Throughout the film, there is the suggestion by journalists and politicians that Pat's condition is a feminist concern: she is shrinking because her voice isn't being heard, her household labor is not valued. This particular articulation of burnout presents a contradiction for the modern woman who "wants it all." On the one hand, burnout brings to light the physical and emotional tolls that women face in juggling multiple roles. Pat Kramer is not just a super-mom, but also the brains behind her husband's catchy jingles and product names. On the other hand, burnout demarcates the scope of interest to the individual in that symptoms have only yet to appear in Pat, although the possibility of a wider threat remains open.

The emphasis on symptoms points to how burnout (and, as I will show, Reaganomics) activated a logic of syndrome and protocol, a logic which typifies neoliberal governmentality. For Michel Foucault, *governmentality* (and the related term *biopower*) refers to a kind of institutional and embodied power designed to define, secure, and maximize the life of populations.[37] Syndrome/protocol does not seek to identify causes and effects but rather modes of optimization. This issue comes to bear strikingly in *The Incredible Shrinking Woman*. After weeks of examinations and tests, Pat Kramer's team of doctors finally determine the cause of her strange condition: The combination of exposure to and consumption of tap water, a flu shot,

[37] This point is discussed at length in the Introduction.

perfume, laundry detergent, hand lotion, glue, bubble bath, shampoo, hair conditioner, mouth wash, hairspray, eye drops, and diet soda has triggered a systemic shrinking disorder. However, even though doctors have determined that Pat Kramer's shrinking is related to exposure to things as ubiquitous as tap water and as specific as Sex Pot perfume, they are unsure of the exact cause of her shrinking. In the film's final sequence, Pat appears to have shrunk into oblivion; she actually falls (imperceptibly) into a murky puddle of detergent, shampoo, perfume, and other household products. This re-exposure reverses her shrinking, and in fact the final shot of the film shows Pat busting out of her clothing as she begins to grow uncontrollably. The disparate combination of household commodities is both the source and the cure of her troubles.

Although the film maintains the tone of a zany comedy, it also shares the ominous, threatening tenor of its source: Richard Matheson's 1956 sci-fi novel *The Shrinking Man*, which parabolized Cold War fears and anxieties. Typically dismissed as a minor genre, Ngai (2012) identifies *zaniness* as a primary aesthetic category both in and for late capitalism. For her, zaniness is about the politically ambiguous zones between work and play, and between high and low culture. Ngai (2012:182) writes: "Zany performers are constantly in motion and in flight from precarious situations." Zaniness is about "physical bombardment" and "thus has a stressed-out, even desperate quality" (Ngai 2012:185). More than anything, the performance of the zany is (as she quotes Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*) a "feeling for form itself"—here, the post-Fordist forms of capitalism that emphasize horizontal networks and flexible production and consumption (Ngai 2012:230). In other words, zaniness works at the margins of existing aesthetic conventions. In the context of late capitalism, such aesthetic conventions are increasingly unclear; thus zaniness resonates because it pushes the boundaries of form by amplifying form and accentuating formal boundaries.

Zaniness abounds in *The Incredible Shrinking Woman*: Its setting of Tasty Meadows, California, is a color-saturated, hyper-stereotyped portrayal of suburbia. As Pat shrinks, her primary companion soon becomes a Ken doll and a later a mischievous gorilla. Everyday household objects—a salad bowl, a toaster, a toy car—become prominent "actors" in the film's plot as Pat gets smaller and smaller. Indeed, these everyday "accoutrements of the Good Life" become menaces and sources of danger for Pat, especially, and most famously, the household sink's garbage disposer, which nearly pulverizes her to death. Above all, Lily Tomlin is a quintessentially zany actress, combining sincerity, deadpan, irony, and physical frenzy in her performance. One of the consequences of the zany aesthetic in *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* is its tendency to deradicalize burnout, especially that related to women's domestic labor.[38] Indeed, burnout syndrome seemed to be popularly dismissed just as it was getting widespread attention. In a feature essay in *Time* magazine (coincidentally, the same edition in which Reaganomics was featured on the cover), Lance Morrow (1981:84) bemoans "the burnout of almost everyone," noting that burnout has become "faddish and indiscriminate, an item of psychobabble, the psychic equivalent, in its ubiquitousness, of jogging." In particular, he points to the teaching profession (where burnout runs through "like Asian flu") and the air traffic controllers (whose daily tension "tended to scorch out their circuits"). In all, Morrow cynically dismisses burnout and its sufferers as narcissistic, unpredictable, and utterly subjective, and—

[38] Another example of the zany representation of women's burnout is *9 to 5* (1980), also starring Lily Tomlin.

“turning the sovereign self into a victim”—even goes so far as to predict that the air traffic controllers probably feel more stress in being unemployed than they did on the job.

Zany Economics

The Incredible Shrinking Woman was released the same year that Ronald Reagan assumed the office of president. The election and presidency of Ronald Reagan is often considered a decisive shift in American politics: For one, Reagan rallied a particular conservative Christian electorate to become a powerful political force, dramatically changing the core constituency of the Republican Party.[39] The Reagan administration’s policies solidified the neoliberal trends that had emerged in the previous decade. Reagan himself became the quintessential postmodern—even *zany*—president. Representing everything from a burned-out movie actor[40] to an American hero, Reagan utilized, intentionally and not, multiple, often-contradictory self-symbols into a dazzling, intertextual, multimedia spectacle where politics and entertainment became indistinguishable.

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[39] This constituency was not inherently “conservative” of course. In her incisive and indispensable history of Walmart’s relationship with Sun Belt Christians, Bethany Moreton (2010) traces this particular conservatism to regional populism and opposition to big business.

[40] By burned-out actor, I do not mean that Reagan necessarily burned out in the clinical sense (although he may have). Rather, I’m referring to a general reference for actors and other performers in TV, film, and music theatre who are no longer popular or can’t perform for whatever reason. Reagan was a prolific actor, and once president of the Screen Guild actors’ union. According to Rogin, Reagan was bitter and paranoid about his own declining popularity and lack of work—leading to his divorce from Jane Wyman (whose popularity was on the rise) and his belief that he was being blackballed from employment in Hollywood.

Michael Rogin's (1987) analysis of Ronald Reagan remains one the most thorough and penetrating among scholarly critiques. Rogin locates Reagan's presidency in a long tradition of countersubversive political demonology in American history, in which paranoia and fear of racial, gender, and class aliens propel the political imagination. In particular, Rogin argues that Reagan garnered support for building up his Cold War military by rousing fears of alien contamination and vulnerable national frontiers; communism became confused with "terrorism and political opposition with crime, drugs, and disease. Even the bodily well-being of the leader was equated with the health of the body politic" (Rogin 1987:xv). Yet Rogin is also keenly aware of the unique means Reagan employed to achieve these political ends. Reagan deliberately quoted from his own and other films in speeches and press conferences, blurring the line between fiction and reality in order to fashion himself as a national hero and to create an impervious, muddled political culture. According to Rogin, Reagan became a sort of trope, a synecdochic figure for a nation apt to divide the world into good and evil yet uninterested in distinguishing fact from fiction, television from reality.

Diane Rubenstein (2008) builds on Rogin's anaylsis to understand Reagan's status as a pure signifier, one disembodied from reality. While Rogin understands that Reagan's popularity traded in his various significations—as a strong, charismatic leader, for example—Rubenstein (2008:30) notes that he ultimately argues that Reagan's "presidential efficacy is tied to corporeal integrity," whether in film or reality.[41] Rubenstein argues that Rogin's analysis of Reagan

[41] It is worth considering charisma as a power component to Reagan's success. Max Weber (1946) considers charisma a "legitimate" basis for power in so far as it is noncoercive. Weber locates charisma in an individual leader's person and connection to God. Ultimately, this

remains at the level of what Jean Baudrillard calls *second-order simulacrum*, that is, a representation or signification based on the technical reproduction of something that is, in the end, real. For her, Reagan—indeed the presidency now itself—circulates at the level of *third-order simulacrum* where signification is dissociated from reality. More accurately put, the sign, in this case, Ronald Reagan, performs with such autonomy that the categories of fiction and reality are moot. Ronald Reagan's performances are hyperreal. They are neither true nor false; they are simply operational, but always attuned to generative feedback within the signifying field of a thoroughly mediated political theatre.

It might seem that these two interpretations of Reagan are opposed. Rogin emphasizes how Reagan's personal biography and filmic characters—along with the long political history of American countersubversivism—become embodied in the *figure* of Reagan, creating a trope of bold leadership in the wake of perceived national threats both internal and external. Rubenstein argues that Reagan should be seen as a *pure sign*, one that troubles distinctions between true and false but is also generative of ongoing cultural and political meanings, a postmodern spectacle of the hyperreal. One way of thinking these two together is through the concept of *affect*.[42] Brian Massumi (2002) argues that Reagan as "the Great Communicator" was inept in his ability to communicate either verbally or extra-verbally.[43] Reagan transmitted confidence and vitality, not through language but through affective capture. As Massumi (2002:40) puts it, "[Reagan] was

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legitimacy dissipates with the passing of the charismatic leader, or it is routinized into institutions. To be clear, Weber is speaking of charismatic authority, not just charisma as such.

[42] See the Introduction for a sustained discussion of affect theory.

[43] Massumi draws on a study by Oliver Sachs here.

able to produce ideological effects by non-ideological means. . . . His means were affective." Affect then allows us to think of Reagan's ideological power both in terms of signification and the corporeal. Massumi implicitly asks for a reconception of ideology, or at the very least of what ideological effects and means are. While followers of Althusser (and Lacan) typically emphasize ideology as a linguistically based, I argue (following Massumi and others) that ideology must also be conceived also in terms of affect, emotions, and moods.

In his first years in office, Reagan became the primary reference point for public understandings of the economic in part because of his ideological power and especially via his affect. In particular, I contend that Reagan's economic program, "Reaganomics," served the function of congealing "the economy" into a discrete entity and category in everyday imaginations. Reaganomics was as concerned with policy as it was with the figure of Reagan and the mobilization of affect, especially related to *burnout*. The figure of Reagan (via Reaganomics) allowed the economy to exist as something separate and outside of the social—as a sign in itself—by designating what is properly economic, non-economic, or supra-economic. Even the term itself, Reaganomics, conflates Reagan with "economics."

Consider the following speech: On April 28th, 1981, approximately one month after his attempted assassination by John Hinkley, President Reagan addressed Congress and the nation. Rejecting the notion the attempt on his life was somehow indicative that the United States had become a "sick society," Reagan said:

> Sick societies don't produce men like the two who recently returned from outer space. Sick societies don't produce young men like Secret Service agent Tim McCarthy, who placed his body between mine and the man with the gun simply because he felt that's what his duty called for him to do. Sick societies don't produce dedicated police officers like Tom Delahanty or able and devoted public servants like Jim Brady. Sick societies don't make people like us so proud to be Americans and so very proud of our fellow

> citizens. Now, let's talk about getting spending and inflation under control and cutting your taxes (Reagan 1981).

The curious rhetorical dance in his speech between ideas of social sickness and social health, between notions of the ideal economy and the ideal citizen, and between the body politic and the body of R lineing eagan himself exemplifies how the economy starts to get bracketed from the social. For example, by rehetorialequivalent of issues of inflation, government spending, and high taxes to national heath after defending the nation's social health, Reagan implies that these concerns are not at all social because they are in fact indicators of sickness—not social sickness but *economic* sickness. Thus "the economy" is established here as something outside of "society." Following this calculus, individual heroes like Secret Service agent Tim McCarthy or dedicated police officer Tom Delahanty are victims of the economic ills of inflation and high taxes that have befallen American society. And just as Reagan himself is healing from the gunshot wounds to his body, the economy—under Reagan's leadership—will heal from its current woes. Indeed, later in the speech, Reagan goes on to report that, "thanks to some very fine people, my health is much improved. I'd like to be able to say that with regard to the health of the economy" (Reagan 1981).

Although the term suggests something logically cohesive, Reaganomics was rather a loose set of policies and outlooks based partly in conservative politics, Chicago School monetarism, and other disparate pieces of economic theory. In general, Reaganomics sought to reduce taxes, reduce spending on social welfare, and increase defense spending. It also had the immediate goals of reducing the high rates of unemployment and inflation that had plagued the nation over the previous five years. Reaganomics treated the economy neither as a part of larger social relationships nor as an historical entity but rather narrowly in terms of symptoms that require fixing, primarily inflation, unemployment, and overspending. Reaganomics functioned ideologically and indeed affectively to demarcate the economy by defining its symptoms as (pre-determined) remedies, a kind of economic syndrome and protocol. As with burnout syndrome, Reaganomics announces a problem but curtails the very scope of the problem by emphasizing treatment protocols over larger (historical, social, political, etc.) contexts.

The centerpiece of Reaganomics was a massive tax cut—still the largest tax cut in American history. Although touted as fix-all for economic woes, the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 (ERTA) had been in the works long before Reagan was elected president. Congressman Jack Kemp from New York had been campaigning for 30% tax cuts since the early 1970s. Critics maintained that such a huge cut in revenues could not be sustained. The introduction of the so-called Laffer curve (see figure 1) provided quasi-technical support for the tax cut: The idea is that higher tax rates do not lead to higher rates of revenue because at some point taxes restrain economic growth and discourage work. The optimal tax rate would be at a point on the curve where the rate of revenue growth is the highest, since revenue growth indicates growth in the economy itself. There is little empirical support for this; indeed as the story goes, University of Southern California economist Arthur Laffer devised the graph on a cocktail napkin while strategizing with now well-known conservative elites Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. In collaboration with colleague William Roth, Kemp introduced the Kemp-Roth tax cut bill twice in the 1970s, and was rejected by Congress.

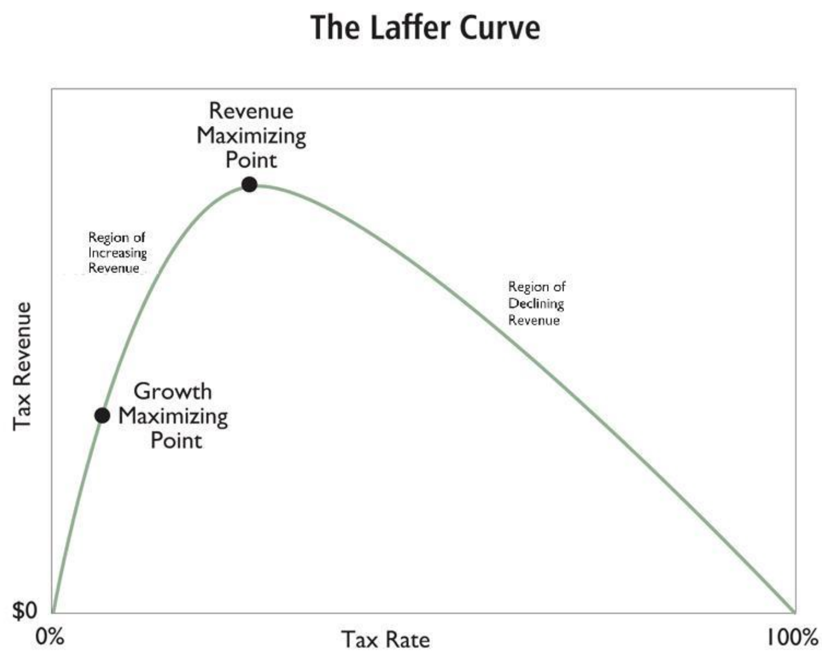

Figure 1. The Laffer curve.

The Kemp-Roth bill was initially viewed as a product of the far right, and at odds with accepted common sense of government, not to mention arithmetic. Yet, the Kemp-Roth began to enjoy popular support in the late 1970s as economic stagnation and a high rate of inflation led to a decline in real wages and purchasing power. But it was only through Reagan and Reaganomics—indeed, a conjuring of the economy itself—that such legislation could pass with popular approval: massive tax cuts were simply part of general economic "recovery" and a larger vision of the economy, one tied to the warmth, charisma, and even the body of Reagan himself. At the time, economist Robert Lekachman (1982:3) observed that "Ronald Reagan must be the nicest president who ever destroyed a union, tried to cut school milk rations from six to four ounces, and compelled families in need of public help to first dispose of household goods in excess of $1000." After all Reagan was a professional actor by trade: crowd-pleasing lines and smokescreens were his métier.

This points to another key feature of Reaganomics: the humongous increase in defense spending. Reagan animated old Cold War fears and anxieties to justify greater defense spending, calling for a 7% to 9% increase over five years. As of 1982, CIA intelligence vastly overstated Soviet defense spending, due in part to flaws in measuring defense as a percent of Gross Domestic Product.[44] Even while empirically unsupported, Reagan was able to garner popular support (or at the very least acquiescence) for this military build-up—not only by mobilizing fears but also by referencing his own films and popular culture, blurring fiction and reality.[45] (Who could forget his "Star Wars" missile interception plan?) The military component of Reaganomics was in fact a thinly veiled redirection of income and wealth from social services to the Pentagon.

In addition to tax cuts and military spending, Reaganomics also involved restricting the money supply, "reforming" government regulation, and reducing government social services. Reaganomics was paradoxical in that it contained disparate kinds of policies while constructing "the economy" as a cohesive, knowable system—a *zany* economics, to be sure. Economists and politicians on both the left and right were skeptical: George H.W. Bush famously called Reagan's plan "voodoo economics." Laffer admitted that "There's more than a reasonable

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[44] Writing in 1982, economist Frank Ackerman points out that figures for Soviet defense spending doubled "overnight" in 1976 due to the reports of one informant. Another flaw in the CIA's accounting is that it assumes the cost of labor, weapons, strategists, etc. is the same in the US as the USSR. Nonetheless, the Pentagon was preparing for the worst-case scenario.

[45] Rogin's book *Ronald Reagan, the Movie* (1988) is particularly instructive here.

probability that I'm wrong, but…why not try something new?"[46] Economists Ackerman (1982) and Lekachman (1982) both refer to Reaganomics as "magical thinking" with little basis in accepted economic science or material realities.

In an incisive analysis, Monica Prasad (2012:375) argues that the 1981 ERTA passed in large part as a "political response to public opinion." She eschews a class-based explanation, as articulated by Harvey (2007), in favor of an "economic" one: public opinion had changed due to the loss of the "public's" economic power—lowered wages, unemployment, inflation. If anything, Prashad provides a convincing argument as to why the reassertion of capitalist class interests succeeded ideologically. I argue however that Reaganomics did other kinds of work: it inaugurated an imagination of the economy at once cohesive and loose; systematic and unpredictable; locatable and unknowable. The characterization of Reaganomics as "magical thinking" or "voodoo economics" points to one of its key operative elements: faith—in markets, in economists, in Reagan himself. Lekachman (1982:51) writes: "Reaganauts are lavish users of faith, frequently of a secular variety, as in their touching, conceivably autobiographical confidence in the propulsive force of avarice." Whether or not greedy self-interest is the engine of economic growth is beside the point here; rather, what is of interest to me is the notion that people must have faith, that they must *believe* in "the economy" in order for it work—whatever the reigning ideology.

The economic crises of the early 1970s challenged long-accepted economic policies, bringing to light "the economy" as an object of scrutiny and public interest. Reaganomics

[46] As quoted in Prasad (2012).

funneled these anxieties around the economy away from a problem of uncertainty and into a matter of faith. In his "theological genealogy of economy and government," political theorist Giorgio Agamben (2011) traces how the Greek *oikonomia* is removed from its Gnostic context by Christian theology and transformed into the "economy" of the Trinity. Thus, the vocabulary of domestic life is rearticulated into the field of religion. The mystery of the Divine becomes too an economic mystery among and between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Conversely, the mysteriousness of the economy and its governance takes on a spiritual element in which faith is fundamental to technical function. In a reading of passages from the Bible, Agamben (2011:23) writes: "The relation between *oikonomia* and mystery is here clear: it is a matter of carrying out faithfully the task of announcing the mystery of redemption hidden in the will of God."

For Agamben, this interplay between "the economy of mystery" in Christianity and the "mystery of the economy" in secular life takes different forms throughout the Middle Ages and into the modern period. So, even while Reaganomics was panned as "magical thinking" from the perspective of most economists, it tapped into this long-standing idea that the operation of the economy is mysterious, a matter of faith as much as scientific tenets. As described above, Ronald Reagan himself evoked numerous meanings—including savior—for a country befallen by economic and political uncertainty. Reagan's messianic legacy even came to bear in the recent 2012 elections, with candidates from both parties claiming to be more true to Reagan's economic vision. More generally, the faith in Reagan and Reaganomics suggests how burnout represented the emotional situation of the time. After all, burnout is a loss of faith in one's work, a withering of the self as ideals and expectations fail to correspond with reality. Just as Querry in Graham Greene's novel seeks to recover his faith in more meaningful work, the protocols for preventing and treating burnout syndrome seek to readjust workers' strategies for managing their work lives. Likewise, Reaganomics was a way of concretizing the mystery of the burned-out economy and restoring faith in it.

A Case of Burnout

Another way to think about Reaganomics is that it was a way of *framing* the economy. Drawing on actor-network theory and Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1986), Michel Callon (1998) argues that economic science is an artificial (even violent) means of extricating economic actors from the real world. *Frames* attempt to establish certain economic processes as the norm, treating frame *overflows* as accidental transgressions, if they are recognized at all. Callon understands that overflows have many sources and directions, one of which I argue is personal life and the emotional situation. Reaganomics framed certain issues as legitimately economic—inflation, unemployment, taxes—while barring other problems from the economic frame. This issue crystallized in the case of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) strike in August of 1981, just months after Reagan took office. In some ways, the case of PATCO is strange, simultaneously exemplary and exceptional in American labor history. PATCO initially distanced themselves from other forms of organized labor, designating themselves as an "organization" of "professionals," which cofounder Jack Maher called a "compromise between union concept and professional society concept."[47] And unlike other kinds of labor, theirs was largely unseen, misunderstood, or often unacknowledged. Yet like other

[47] As retold in McCartin (2011:67).

professionals such as teachers, nurses, and social workers, who were also beginning to unionize around the same time, air traffic controllers were highly—sometimes disastrously—prone to burnout. Indeed, burnout could be viewed not only as the problem Reaganomics sought to address (a burned-out economy) but also what it failed to include in its frame (the actual experience of burnout).

After several shaky starts PATCO came into being in the summer of 1968, a tumultuous time in American history and one in which "white collar" professions were increasingly unionizing. While air traffic controllers had long organized as the Air Traffic Control Association (ATCA), the organization lacked any collective bargaining power and was essentially an anti-union/pro-management branch of the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) with most of its top leadership hailing from the FAA (Shostak and Skocik:45–56). Indeed it was not until January 1962, through an executive order by President Kennedy, that federal workers were permitted to legally organize.[48] Nonetheless, the boom in commercial air travel in the 1950s and 1960s made greater and greater demands of controllers even while the general public was unaware of their work. PATCO gained widespread attention with the help of celebrity attorney F. Lee Bailey, who was officially named PATCO's executive director even though he accepted a $1 token salary. Bailey publicized the air traffic controllers' plight as a matter of public safety, even appearing on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* to bring attention to PATCO. Despite controllers' ambivalent relationship with Bailey (who was considered by many to be an

[48] While Executive Order 10988, titled "Employee-Management Cooperation in the Federal Service," granted federal workers the right to organize and collect union dues, the order was actually quite limited in its scope, leaving the Civil Service Commission, a federal agency, the power to interpret and implement the policy.

egomaniacal self-promoter), PATCO "took off" in 1968 with strong membership and an aggressive agenda that included ending the hiring freeze, raising the pay grade, reducing hours, and securing new equipment. Even presidential candidate Richard Nixon promised to "strengthen our air controller force, improve their working conditions and provide them with the new equipment they need to keep our airways safe" (McCartin 2011:88).

In his meticulous account of air traffic controllers and unionization in the US, labor historian Joseph McCartin (2011) documents PATCO's success and failures throughout the 1970s, the intricacies of its organization and leadership, and the larger contexts that would lead to its ultimate demise in 1981. As PATCO's membership increased (to an impressive 85% by 1976, far more than any other federal government union), it also became increasingly militant in its demands—and indeed it made significant strides in improving work conditions and even reclassifying the pay grade of controllers, an indirect but effective means of increasing wages. PATCO faced numerous challenges too. For one, air traffic control had historically been a white male profession, and the union often failed to create solidarity among this constituency and the growing numbers of African American, female, and younger Vietnam veteran controllers. PATCO also faced consistent opposition from the FAA, whose leadership included a number of former controllers, which was a particular source of bitterness. Both PATCO and the FAA mobilized the idea of *safety* to justify their positions: McCartin (2011) locates the seeds of PATCO in the aftermath of a disastrous midair collision over Staten Island and Brooklyn in 1960 that killed 134 people. While numerous factors came into play (courts never determined an exact cause), the FAA's response was to investigate its own employees rather than to address issues of outdated equipment, workplace hours and stress, and the rapidly growing and changing commercial air travel industry. The 1960 disaster made evident to controllers the need to organize in some way on their own behalf. While the issue of passenger safety did allow PATCO to make some gains, it was often used (by PATCO and the FAA alike) to initiate and to wage a public relations battle.

The ongoing strain between PATCO and the FAA is evident in the union's document archive[49], especially with regard to controller burnout. Among the many roles the union performed for controllers was to advocate for workman's compensation, sick leave, and disability benefits. In the hundreds of controller medical and compensation files, the vast majority of cases involved hypertension, ulcers, depression, anxiety, alcoholism, and other symptoms consistent with burnout syndrome. One of the most persistent causes of stress was the fear of a midair collision or "traumatic neurosis" following an air traffic control error or near miss. The stress was often so severe that it prevented many controllers from working—often by order of the FAA. This problem presented a catch-22 with regard to compensation: the symptoms of burnout prevented the worker from doing his or her job, yet, because they were of a psychological nature, did not constitute a valid basis for disability benefits. In other words, the FAA acknowledged the symptoms of burnout prevented workers from performing their job but refused to acknowledge that the job itself was the source of the symptoms. As a result, nearly 90% of air traffic controllers retired early due to health problems.

[49] PATCO's full document archive is stored at Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA. In my research I have read most if not all of the files of union members seeking disability benefits. For the purposes of this chapter and for issues of privacy, I discuss air traffic controllers' medical issues in a general way.

Both PATCO and the FAA employed researchers to study the potential hazards of air traffic control. In a five-year study, Robert Rose (in an internal report for the FAA) found increased instances of hypertension, ulcers, and diabetes in controllers compared to other professions; however, it was "inconclusive" if these conditions were a direct result of work, a finding the FAA used to justify its inaction. In a 1979 memo to PATCO president Robert E. Poli, the FAA stated that air traffic control is not a uniquely stressful profession, a curious statement since it spent more than $2.8 million to study it. PATCO's doctor found similar results but made different conclusions; as presented to the US Senate in 1969, Dr. Wayne Sands wrote that "anxiety is the malady and constant companion of the Air Traffic Controller" and leads to "elevated blood pressure, heart damage, stomach ulcers, bowel complaints, restlessness, fatigue, muscle tenseness, sleeplessness, and irritability" (7). According to Sands, these emotional and physical ailments make controllers more prone to error, accidents, and near misses. His recommendations included shorter work days, facility rotation, and second-career programs.

In an unpublished follow-up report, Dr. Sands documented the FAA's neglect of his and their own studies of emotional stress in air traffic controllers. The FAA's failure to address the issue has led to dwindling numbers of controllers and increased risk for accidents. In fact he says that the FAA's "misrepresentation of their own researchers to the press is indeed unprecedented." He goes on to report that any complaints are typically met with harassment, punishment, or dismissal. The issue of employee health would turn out to be the most divisive between PATCO and the FAA: PATCO claimed that the FAA ignored the problem; the FAA claimed that the union manufactured or even caused the problem.

The Strike and Aftermath

PATCO was the only major union to endorse Reagan in the 1980 election. Reagan had shown moderation with regard to unions during his tenure as the governor of California, and PATCO leadership was frustrated with President Carter's inaction with the FAA. After his election, however, it quickly became apparent that Reagan was no supporter of labor: his administration sought to roll back enforcement of workplace safety and health standards; it opposed increasing the minimum wage; and his appointees to the National Labor Relations Board favored employers over labor. Nonetheless, PATCO's demands were ambitious, and included a 5% increase of base salaries, exemption from overtime caps, increased pay for night shifts, 6.5-hour workdays, and severance pay for medically disqualified controllers. Of course, these demands were not met, the union went on strike in August 1981, and President Reagan fired the striking controllers.[50]

The PATCO strike was pivotal for Reagan's presidency and agenda. Mainstream media often represented the strike through the lens of the Cold War, and cited Reagan's union busting as a sign of strength and virility. More importantly, it set the tone and precedent for the coming years of neoliberal policy that would undermine unions and workers' welfare in favor of business interests. This is not to say that there was no fallout: In November 1981, a mentally ill air traffic controller in Ft. Worth, Texas, held coworkers hostage in a three-hour standoff at an air traffic control center. The FAA had ordered him back to work after rejecting his request for medical disqualification for depression. In January 1982, an Air Florida flight crashed into Washington

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[50] See McCartin (2011) and Shostack and Skocik (1986) for detailed accounts of the strike itself.

DC's 14th Street Bridge minutes after takeoff, killing 74 people onboard and 4 people on the bridge. Although there had been a clear violation of FAA regulations, the FAA denied that (newly hired) controllers played any role in the crash. Former PATCO controllers were outraged too when Reagan used the tragedy to enhance his speech about "the spirit of American heroism" just two weeks later.

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While the term "burnout" is now commonly used in everyday speech, it is nearly absent in the clinical literature and in public discourse. Chronic depression, generalized anxiety disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other conditions are today more favored diagnoses. My point is not to discount the validity or existence of burnout syndrome (or these other conditions) but to emphasize burnout as a historically specific public mood. Burnout exemplifies the emotional situation of the early 1980s. It resonated at multiple levels ideologically—burned-out labor, a burned-out economy—just as it represented a tangible condition experienced by millions.

Reaganomics was publicized as the antidote to a burned-out economy. In PATCO's struggle with the FAA and Reagan, burnout was barred from the frame of legitimacy. Part of the reason for this was due to the kind of zany aesthetic with which it was represented—not just in films like or *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* or *9 to 5* (1980)—but also in the zany economics that was Reaganomics. In this sense, burnout presents a paradox around the economy: as an affect it drew people to the economy and enabled it to be conceived as something cohesive and whole. Simultaneously, the very serious stakes of burnout are prohibited from its discourse. Instead, Reaganomics advanced the notion of the economy as a matter of faith.

CHAPTER 3

EXUBERANCE AND WASTE IN SAN FRANCISCO'S DOT-COM ECONOMY

Introduction

In the not-too-distant future, a teenage girl from Seattle and a young Japanese man share tea and a quiet moment. Not quite a romantic encounter, they compare their computer hardware and software. Chia McKenzie pulls out her Sandbenders, a computer famous worldwide because of the ways it integrates users' sight and corporeality with the machine. Masahiko sees it and says: "Beautiful. I have seen a small disk player by the same maker. It is a cult, yes?" In fact the computer was conceived and built on an Oregon commune, but the distinction between cult and commune seems to matter little to the couple. Masahiko guides Chia to his bedroom where he introduces her to the Walled City, a secret but now global multi-user domain whose software he cowrote. Chia proposes that they share their respective hardware and software: she can install a virtual Sandbenders on his machine if he will give her access to the Walled City.

This minor scene from *Idoru* (1996)—the second novel in cyberpunk author William Gibson's Bridge trilogy—stands out for its relative calmness in an otherwise frenetic story of rock-and-roll parties, global crime syndicates, and potentially disastrous new technologies. Chia and Masahiko very soon find themselves trapped in a Tokyo hotel room, caught between a chaotic frenzy of mobs, one mob trading in illegal nanotechnologies, the other comprised of teenage rock fans. Indeed, their innocent comingling of hardware and software in a quiet apartment had riotous outcomes. The scene also presents a small opening to the more general concerns of this chapter. I argue that exuberance, euphoria, and related affects became an ecstatic source and response to new technology and the New Economy—but also an "irrational" excess that threatens this New Economy by distorting the value-disclosing measures of it: finance capital, confidence, and creativity. Georges Bataille (1991) used the term "exuberance" to describe the nonproductive expenditure of the surplus energy and resources inevitably generated by any economy, from those of ancient civilization to modern capitalism. Unlike the classical political economists who emphasized scarcity in specific markets, Bataille demonstrates how wasteful expenditure—in the form of luxury, squander, war, or destruction—forms the basis not just of economic activity but also "living matter in general" (Bataille 1991:23). While Bataille emphasizes solar energy, religious ritual, and sexuality as exuberant expenditures, I examine how sociality in general became a node of exuberance in San Francisco's "dot-com" boom and bust. I argue that the excesses of the dot-com boom occasioned (in Bataille's terms) both "glorious," luxurious exuberance as well as "catastrophic" exuberance. The dot-com bubble in San Francisco expanded a culture of wasteful luxury. For example, high-end restaurants, clubs, boutiques, hotels, and refurbished homes flourished from the flow of venture capital. Most famously, many dot-com companies threw lavish parties for any number of occasions. "Never before, not during the textile, transportation or steel booms, have companies spent so much money on people who don't work for them, and who often have only a passing interest in the company," says Nancy Koehn, a business historian at Harvard Business School.[51]

However, *exuberance* for Bataille is also excess that is potentially catastrophic. In 1996, Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan warned that "irrational exuberance" would cause instability and volatility in stock prices as tens of millions of Americans new to stock ownership

[51] Quoted in Cave (2000).

entered the market. In particular, the rapid growth of the Internet sector (especially dot-com startups that would eventually fail) propelled this dangerous optimism. The problem of "irrational exuberance" was popularized by economists (notably Robert J. Shiller (2001) in *Irrational Exuberance*) as a way of bridging public imaginations of "the economy" with academic/technical economic discourse, here, through the lens of behavioral economics. More than ever before, the work of economists and "the economy" as an abstract are mutually productive of one another, which was especially important in the 1990s as just-in-time production and predictive mathematical modeling were becoming basic economic tools for representing, predicting, and indeed shaping its objects.

The dot-com boom seemed to thrive on technological innovation. Yet the technologies of "the Internet" were long in place before the economic boom of the 1990s. Working with and against the promise of *techne* as a "bringing forth," the dot-com boom thrived on new modes of sociality as much as technology. In other words, the talent, creativity, and sociality that made the Internet economically viable was underdeveloped vis-à-vis its "hardware." Somewhat paradoxically, there was a notion that this sociality could be fostered in certain kinds of urban centers and culture.[52] For example, urban popular culture critic Richard Florida (2012) has argued that "urban renewal" since the late 1990s is the effect of creative capital; he goes on to urge local and regional governments to attract creative workers. Florida's understanding and

[52] In different but related veins, Saskia Sassen (2001) and David Harvey (2012) have convincingly argued that cities have become "command centers" for finance capital in the contemporary era of globalization. Sassen and Harvey emphasize how the contradictions of capitalism materialize spatially; my example of 1990s San Francisco supports their theses, but supplements them by elaborating the affective dimensions of finance capital.

diagnosis of urban life has (rightly) been dismissed as elitist and technocratic. Nonetheless, his "vision" is of interest to me: Silicon Valley's business parks and suburban sprawl are antithetical to Florida's neo-Habermasian vision of the city-as-public-sphere. Yet, San Francisco by virtue of its history, geography, and architecture epitomized the city culture that Florida says most successfully attracts creative workers. And San Francisco nightlife flourished. Lavish money was spent on parties meant to attract and woo potential tech talent. More generally, these parties cultivated exuberance and euphoria—not just for tech-industry labor but also for other (peripheral) creative workers that facilitated a requisite urban experience.

Throughout the dot-com boom, many business leaders of San Francisco's tourist industry became concerned that cash grants to the growing homeless population were promoting alcoholism and drug use, behaviors that hurt hotel and restaurant business, and, more importantly, were a blight and kill-joy for the very urban sociality, exuberance, and creativity that drove the "New Economy." In San Francisco, this concern culminated in the passing of Proposition N, "Care Not Cash," in 2002, which effectively cut off cash payments to homeless persons in order to expand shelters, substance abuse centers, and other "care" services—a catastrophic exuberance for the thousands who depended on that monthly income to survive. Thus, as the dot-com boom conjured national fantasies of unrestricted prosperity through technological progress, it was played out in the cultivation of unlikely socialities and not unpredictable disasters.

The juxtaposition of Bataille's general economy, history of the Internet, behavioral economics, and urban homeless history and policy may seem disparate. However, this chapter has two more general aims: 1) to reiterate the themes of the dissertation, especially that "the economy" surfaces and operates within an emotional situation, affective atmosphere, or public mood, and that the particular historical iteration of "the economy" is sustained by and productive of an attendant mood; and 2) to continue to develop a provisional historical trajectory that describes the simultaneously distant and intimate confluence of "the economy" with everyday life. Thus here, as in my other chapters, I look to cultural objects—including Gibson's cyberpunk Bridge trilogy (written in the 1990s and set in near-future San Francisco) as well as writings on behavioral economics—as traces of the dot-com economy's confluence with its guiding emotional situation of exuberance.

Genres as Emotional Situation

> Sensation develops through the fall, by falling from one level to another. The idea of a positive and active reality of the fall is essential here. Why is the difference in level not experienced in the other direction, as a rise? Because the fall must not be interpreted in a thermodynamic manner, as if it produced entropy, a tendency to equalize at the lowest level. On the contrary, the fall exists to affirm the difference in level as such. All tension is experienced in a fall.
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> – Gilles Deleuze, "What Is a Triptych?" (2005)

Throughout this dissertation I demonstrate how "the economy" has emerged as a cultural, affective, and governmental genre since the 1970s in the United States. Building on the work of Lauren Berlant (2011), I understand *genre* to indicate not just conventions of representation but modes of expression that elude or escape such conventional boundaries. Genres organize collective sentiments, making them legible, both in the moment and over time. Genres can give way to ideology, but always exceed ideology in the affects they channel. As a genre, "the economy" has appeared in film, economic textbooks, and presidential speeches. Like most genres, the economy functions episodically: it is generic because it has exemplars. It is a genre of affective intensity in the economic field. Indeed, Berlant understands genre in contemporary history as often situational, akin to the situation comedy or police procedural. This notion of *genre situation* resonates with Virno's concept of *emotional situation*: the affective atmosphere or public mood in which "the economy" circulates discursively, ideologically, and materially. Cyberpunk, a science fiction subgenre, captures the emotional situation attendant to the dot-com boom and bust in San Francisco. Cyberpunk stories are typically set in a not-too-distant future dominated by networked technologies and unbridled capitalism, and marred by natural disaster and the breakdown of authority. Cyberpunk's protagonists are often hackers and disaffected young people who unwittingly find themselves involved in sinister schemes and noir-ish detective plots. Although cyberpunk is associated with various authors and has several genealogies, Gibson's 1984 novel *Neuromancer* is usually considered to be genre-defining. (Afterall, it was in that book that Gibson first coined the term "cyberspace" that is still used today.) Since then, cyberpunk has enjoyed immense popularity and influence. Indeed, the term cyberpunk describes not only a science fiction subgenre but also a kind of movement that formed in the 1980s and 1990s to advance and critique burgeoning Internet technology.

Of course, cyberpunk emerged not without controversy or critics. Prominent literary critic Fredric Jameson (2005) seems skeptical of cyberpunk and Gibson in particular, finding his work bleak, cynical, and lacking in the utopic possibility posed in other science fiction. While the (more ostensibly "literary") fiction of Thomas Pynchon or David Foster Wallace shares many of the same themes as Gibson's work—paranoia, conspiracy theories, media-saturated society, unfettered global capitalism—Jameson (2005:390–91) finds Gibson's work too often "autoreferential" where in "the commercial nominalism of the postmodern everything unique and interesting tends towards the proper name," in other words towards branding. Brands and branding inherently aim to be interesting yet lack aesthetic value from a literary or artistic point of view. Yet, Ngai (2012) argues that the "merely interesting" be re-evaluated as a significant aesthetic category in late capitalism.[53] For her, the *interesting* as an aesthetic is "cool," both in its ironic detachment and in its technocratic evocation of information and knowledge work. Yet the ambiguity of interesting as an aesthetic category is what makes it unique: to declare something interesting immediately demands a legitimating justification. As Ngai (2012:170) puts it: "Far from being a style without content or a judgment that is somehow not genuinely aesthetic, the deepest content of the aesthetic category of interesting is precisely that of the justification of aesthetic judgments in general." In this sense, the interesting is diachronic and subcultural; the interesting entails a demand from the outside about why it is interesting. And such is the case with cyberpunk: its aesthetic value requires justification from those "in the know." Thus, as cyberpunk critic Brian McHale (2010) points out, the question to be asked is not "What is cyberpunk?" but "Who are the cyberpunks?" Indeed, cyberpunk was not just a literary or cultural genre but also a kind of movement involving computer scientists, philosophers, gamers, college students, and others who contributed to the Internet's manifestation in the late twentieth century.

Ironically, by the time the Internet became widely available and utilized in the 1990s, cyberpunk was often regarded as a dead genre because its vision of the future was becoming

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[53] Along with "interesting," Ngai identifies "cute" and "zany" as dominant aesthetic categories in post-Fordist capitalism. See chapter 2 of this dissertation for a discussion of zany economics and burnout.

more nostalgic than prescient, which is to say that many of its stock elements—particularly the imagining of a world dominated by networked technologies—had already come to pass, or was well on its way. This is precisely why Gibson's Bridge trilogy is of interest to me in the context of this chapter. Written throughout the mid-1990s and set in near-future San Francisco, the Bridge trilogy represents a cultural counterpoint to—and, as I argue, an affective window into—the exuberant economy of San Francisco at that time. For literary critic Neil Easterbrook (2010:50), the Bridge trilogy stages an "explicit interrogation of the present that provides a joy ride through the future." Unlike Gibson's previous Sprawl trilogy, Easterbrook argues that these later novels are as concerned with questions of individual agency, social relationships, and celebrity culture as they are with the effects (and affects) of technology. Appearing throughout all three novels, the character Shinya Yamazaki calls himself "a student of existential sociology" as he—and Gibson himself—become quasi-ethnographers of their fictional world. Because of this, Easterbrook prefers to call the novels a "triptych" (rather than trilogy). He characterizes the novels as operating as a "'binary flicker' between the level of plot and the hermeneutic allegory—between, on the one hand, the more obvious generic conventions of the narrative's action and, on the other hand, more-or-less obsessively explicit instructions to readers on how a novel (especially the one *in hand*) may be read" (Easterbrook 2010:60).

In his analysis of the paintings of Francis Bacon, Gilles Deleuze (2005) elaborates how Bacon's triptychs create a sort of rhythm of sensation between the painting and the viewer. Each frame elicits a different level of intensity or affect. As the epigraph above from *The Logic of Sensation* describes, we experience the rhythm of sensation as a "fall" from one level to the next. Together, the triptychs' affective force is a resonance between the levels of sensation. In this chapter, I read Gibson's Bridge trilogy (or triptych) alongside my analysis of the dot-com bubble in San Francisco. Following Deleuze, I treat each novel in the series as a "fall," or better put, as a "digital flicker," within the trilogy's overall affective atmosphere of exuberance, euphoria, and dread. I argue that the novels' affective tone or mood resonates with conceptions of "the economy" during the dot-com boom and bust of the 1990s.

Exuberance in the New Economy

Bataille (1991) presents a general theory of economic activity that perhaps appears counterintuitive and certainly at odds with economic science. The classical political economists sought to understand the general laws of production, from the productivity of individual labor to the growth of national economies. In general, classical economics emphasized scarcity and competition. Free markets solved the problem of scarcity by establishing equilibrium of supply and demand, expressed as price. Competition ensured not only function and efficiency of markets but overall economic growth globally. The free market is ideally indifferent and beneficent—indifferent to the particularities of human culture but beneficent in its "invisible hand" of producing wealth (if unevenly) for all. Economic science generalizes these isolated ends of humans as universal, while for Bataille, most economic activity tends to be conceived with particular, limited ends. He begins with a different set of assumptions:

> The living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life; the excess energy (wealth) can be used for the growth of the system (e.g., an organism); if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically" (Bataille 1991:21).

This excess energy, this waste, may take the form of luxury, religious rites, or war to name a few. In any case the search for a solution to this waste entails an exuberance of "incomparable force" (Bataille 1991:14).

It is this forceful exuberance that I am interested in exploring in the context of the 1990s dot-com boom. I argue that exuberance here takes the form of excess sociality: on the one hand, the sociality upon which the Internet sector thrived and expanded; on the other, an excess sociality that appears not only as luxurious expenditure and elaborate parties, but also catastrophe for vulnerable populations. Of course, Marx long ago pointed to the role of social cooperation as a means of extracting relative surplus value. Indeed for Marx (1992:454), "cooperation remains the fundamental form of the capitalist mode of production." This social cooperation or *general intellect* congeals as fixed capital in the form of machinery and technological know-how.[54] Many recent theorists have developed Marx's concept of the general intellect to understand the character of capital accumulation in the milieu of post-Fordism and globalization.[55] For Virno (2004), the general intellect manifests above all as communication, not just materialized as fixed capital (as in machines) but in interaction, knowledge, and the faculty for performance. Virno calls these capacities *virtuosity*.[56]

Drawing on Marx and Virno, Tiziana Terranova (2000; 2004) understands the Internet as the technology par excellence of the general intellect, embodied both as fixed capital and as

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[54] Marx describes this in greater detail in the *Grundrisse*. Louis Althusser used the term "know-how" to indicate how collective knowledge materialized not only as capital but also ideology.

[55] See Hardt and Negri (2000); Terranova (2004); Marazzi (2008, 2010); Virno (2004).

[56] See chapter 1 of this dissertation for a more sustained discussion of Virno and virtuosity.

collective intelligence and virtuosity. Unlike the commodities of Marx's *Capital* that conceal the social relationships behind their production, the digital economy renders its commodities transparent, "showing throughout their reliance on the labour which produces and sustains them" (Terranova 2000:90). For Terranova (2000:91), a great deal of the labor that has sustained and built the Internet is "free labour"—that of the millions of users who are not only unpaid but volunteer their labor "for the pleasures of communication and exchange." Free labor therefore cannot be disassociated from other forms of labor that typify late capitalism (knowledge work, emotional labor, service, etc.) in that the Internet increasingly pervades other types of economies. In a related vein, Hardt and Negri (2000) argue that *general intellect* must not be limited to the realm of communication, language, and the incorporeal. They extend Foucault's concept of *biopower* to theorize how life itself is subsumed into capital – not just as immaterial labor but also in the form of subjectivity. As they define it, biopolitical production entails the social dimension of living labor, which draws not just on its knowledge and intellect but also the productivity of bodies and affect. They write:

> The great industrial and financial powers thus produce not only commodities but also subjectivities. They produce agentic subjectivities within the biopolitical context: they produce needs, social relations, bodies, and minds—which is to say, they produce producers. In the biopolitical sphere, life is made to work for production and production is made to work for life (Hardt and Negri 2000:32).

Thus as sociality increasingly becomes the backbone of capitalism (as life, as general intellect, as free labor, and as technology and know-how), affects such as exuberance take on a greater role in the production process.

In the 1990s, the Internet appeared to be an overnight sensation, presenting new possibilities for communication, entertainment and gaming, and, of course, commerce. In fact the technologies, social institutions and relationships, infrastructure, and knowledge that comprised the Internet had been in development for at least half a century before the Science and Advanced-Technology Act of 1992, which opened the Internet for commercial activity. Nonetheless, the seeming newness of the Internet and its technologies, and the rapidity of its expansion, provoked a kind of euphoria, an exuberance that bound expectations of technology with imaginations of the economy. For most people, the computer (whether at work or home) had been just that: a local computational tool. Suddenly, it was also a communication medium—and one imbued with possibilities for extracting surplus value. For one, networked computing intensified existing means and relations of production by speeding communication and coordinating production and consumption, the hallmarks of just-in-time production and flexible accumulation. The Internet also presented what seemed to be endless possibilities for developing new markets, not just for products and services through "e-commerce" but also all of the personal electronic devices necessary for Internet access.

As historian Janet Abbate (2000) points out, computer technology was not inherently disposed to be a communication medium. Rather the Internet and its technologies developed out of specific and often contradictory historical and social situations. While multiple genealogies could certainly be traced, the Internet has its origins in Cold War defense strategies. As a response to the USSR's launch of Sputnik in 1957, the US Department of Defense created the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) whose various projects included the development of "survivable communications" in the wake of a potential nuclear attack. Since the location and damage of such an attack was unpredictable, the communication network required the capacity to operate without a central command center but rather through nodes along distributed paths. The invention of “packet switching” not only solved this problem but more importantly would allow for multiple and simultaneous users. And while packet switching was generally acknowledged as the ideal mode of sharing information among users, there was the immediate problem of implementation, in particular of developing a standard protocol that would allow communication between different kinds of computers. In developing the “ARPANET,” project managers facilitated work between the military, the RAND Corporation (a nonprofit military contractor and think tank), and university scientists, engineers, philosophers, and linguists.

According to Abbate (2000), the cultivation of conviviality and sense of community among the various researchers was one of the key reasons that ARPANET was ultimately successful. Informal and formal presentations and critiques by researchers, annual retreats, frequent site visits by project leaders, and graduate student seminars were just a few of the ways that friendly collaboration was fostered. Simply, “Good relations among ARPANET contractors did not just make professional life more pleasant; they were also important to the project’s success” (Abbate 2000:69). In a sense, conviviality and informal community are embedded in the technologies of the ARPANET itself. Put differently, ARPANET (and, later, the Internet) as a technology expanded due to a particular kind of sociality. For example, email and local area networks (LANs) came into existence not as part of a larger plan by ARPA but by actual users in the process of developing the hardware and protocol of the network. In the 1980s the Internet split off from the military and continued to operate under the National Science Foundation. The number of networks and users grew exponentially, particularly within and among colleges and universities. Meanwhile, local area network services were becoming increasingly lucrative in the private sector. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the commercial potentials for the Internet beyond email and bulletin boards were becoming increasingly evident. In 1992, it became legal to use the Internet for commerce, and in 1995 government ownership of the Internet infrastructure ended with four contracts given to National Service Providers who would operate gateways and ensure access.

Gathering-up Energy

In his seminal essay on technology, philosopher Martin Heidegger (1977) offers a way of thinking about technology that tackles the essence of technology. Indeed, the essence of technology is different than technology, which is typically understood in instrumental (a means to an end) and anthropological terms (human activity). For Heidegger, technology is not merely an instrument but a mode of revealing truth. An analysis of the ancient Greek word *techne* points to what kind of truth is being revealed. For Aristotle, *techne* is not just the activity and skills or arts of the mind, but also the opening-up of possibility. As Heidegger (1977:13) surmises, "[Techne] reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another." Modern technology (in Heidegger's time, modern machinery and industrial production) reveals by calling-forth the concealed energy—the standing-reserve energy—of the Earth, the Sun, and the natural world. He calls the "gathering up" of this standing-reserve energy *enframing* (*Ge-stell*). As the essence of modern technology, enframing also entails the gathering up of human faculties and dispositions, which at the time was dominated by ordering (as in the physical sciences). Thus, Heidegger writes (1977:24) "Enframing is the gathering together that belongs to that setting-upon which sets upon man and puts him in a position to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve."

Heidegger's analysis of technology has rightly been critiqued for its anthropocentric division of human and nature: technology is merely the human appropriation of already-existing energy in nature. One of the most trenchant critiques comes from Marxian theory. In his analysis in *Uneven Development* (2008), geographer Neil Smith observes that the dualistic quality of modern conceptions of nature have been instrumental for designating the legitimate spaces for capital investment. On the one hand, nature is conceived as external to society, where society is the means through which human beings dominate nature. On the other, nature is conceived as universal, operating under intransigent laws. In this conception, society and humans also function through natural, universal laws (for example, "the laws of the market"). For Smith, bourgeois capitalism relies on both conceptions simultaneously in order to commodify anything and everything while universalizing capitalism and "human-nature" as ubiquitous and inevitable. As he wryly puts it: "The human-nature argument is one of the most lucrative investments in the bourgeois portfolio. It is the jewel in the crown of universal nature. But it is important to understand that the human-nature argument dissolves into nothing if for any reason at all the externality of nature is denied" (Smith 2008:29). While other Marxian critiques (such as Alfred Schmidt's) argue that nature and society mediate one another, these critiques inadvertently reproduce the society/nature divide. Smith argues rather that nature is not only part of the production process, but a product of that process. Capitalism produces nature in so far as it designates what enters the production process (minerals, water, machines, wood, human labor, etc.) and what is transformed into commodities for exchange. More importantly, capitalism invests and divests in the built environment at different rates and scales, producing space (including nature) as a way of mobilizing capital and extracting surplus value.

The Marxian perspective has since informed the field of critical science studies, which, not coincidentally, sparked the so-called science wars of the 1990s. Scholars associated with science studies have emphasized the socially mediated nature of scientific knowledge and the ways in which science and technology are entangled with power and capital.[57] Critical science studies need not be at odds with Heidegger. According to Hans Ruin (2009), Heidegger's position with regard to technology is not as Manichean as portrayed by some critics; in fact it is far more complex (or at least ambiguous) when considered in relation to his larger oeuvre. Ruin notes the significance of Heidegger's subsequent use of the Greek word *pragmata* (rather than *techne*) to indicate the tools or equipment of bringing-forth. Heidegger increasingly privileges the use of techne as a means of revealing rather than the merely technical. In this understanding, not only nature but also human beings become exploitable resources. More importantly, enframing—the gathering up of energy—allows us to be free for (as much as we are free from*)* technology. As Ruin (2009:193) puts it: "[W]e then ask not simply for the truth about technology, but for the truth *of* and *by* technology" (emphasis mine).

Read this way, strict distinctions between man and nature blur. Most crucial, technology is no longer something outside of (human) being but essential to it. To be clear, I have no wish to recuperate Heidegger for Heidegger's sake. I have revisited Heidegger's analysis of technology in order to link it to his conception of mood and tone. For Heidegger, being (for humans and

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[57] See, for example, Aronowitz (1988), Latour (1988), Haraway (1990).

maybe for technology) entails a “there” (being-there), a kind of situatedness in the world that is sensed and experience as mood (*Stimmung*). Jonathon Flatley (2008) describes *Stimmung* as an “affective atmosphere” that is foundational to how we attribute value or meaning to experience. *Stimmung* has also been translated as *tonality* or *attunement*, again suggesting the sensation of being in the world. As Jean-Luc Nancy (1997:41) concludes, techne (as opposed to technoscience) should be seen as the creation of the world: not of nature, knowledge, or material, but of sense—“sense in *excess* of all sense” that presupposes knowledge and praxis. This exegetical departure into Heidegger and those working with him is intended to demonstrate how technology is not only essential to being but also, more importantly for this chapter, that it is a mode of enframing (capturing and radiating) mood, specifically here, the exuberance attendant to the 1990s dot-com boom. Indeed, for Heidegger enframing always entails an excess, which, recalling Bataille, is the basis for any economy: Every economy must deal with the problem of excess and waste, with nonrecoverable energy. It is this energy that is the source of exuberance. I argue that the Internet should be seen as a technology that not only amplifies but also generates exuberance. For Heidegger, technology represents a means of gathering-up energy from the Sun, the Earth, as well as human subjects “stockpiled” into institutions, from schools to factories to concentration camps. Bataille scholar Allan Stoekl (2007) points out some similarities between the two thinkers with regard to technology—and one key difference. Whereas Heidegger sees the stockpiling of energy as a monstrous destruction of “human” subjectivity, Bataille understands excess more broadly. Stoekl (2007:135) states:

> Bataille is interested in the *economy* of the excessive party, the ritual or sacred part, nonrecuperable matter or energy, in and through which the self is opened out in “communication.” There is, in other words, an economy of the excessive part for Bataille;

> ritual is always already a matter of the concentration of energy in an object and the expenditure of that energy.

Just as Heidegger's mill gathers-up energy from the Rhine, the Internet gathers up energy—sociality itself—and "ritualizes" it into infinite forms of communication and the general intellect. As I mentioned before, the Internet's "software" (its sociality) was underdeveloped vis-à-vis its hardware when it was introduced to the public in the 1990s. This introduction unleashed an excess exuberance that pre-existed as potential, after all, as I described above, the very hardware of the Internet contains the stamp of its social history as a collaboration of numerous and varying interests. And while Internet technologies developed among competing goals, they also emerged out of trial and error and through the idiosyncrasies of people and relationships. This basic fact about the technology becomes amplified as the Internet goes public in the 1990s.

In his writings on technology, science fiction writer Stanislav Lem (2013:13) uses the example of the typewriter to explicate one understanding of technological development: the Universe (as far as we know) does not spontaneously create typewriters, but the potential for typewriters is contained within it. In the case of the Internet, its potential and theoretical uses preexisted their actualization; once unleashed, the exuberance created what Lem (2013:80) would call an "'inertial' effect of technological progress (driven by the already accumulated but still unexploited results of scientific enquiry)." Another ways of thinking this is through the idioms of *technical tendency* and *individuation*. Drawing on Andre Leroi-Gourhan and Gilbert Simondon respectively, philosopher of technology Bernard Stiegler (1998) describes the contemporary technical system as one in which concrete (individuated) technologies represent an actualization of already-existing (pre-individual) technical tendencies that are culturally, materially, and linguistically embedded, and thus just one realization among many possibilities within the technical system as a whole. This allows Stiegler to theorize technology as a "process of exteriorization" that constitutes time and space, regardless of human intentionality. If we add Heidegger's concept of *Stimmung* (mood, tone) to the picture, I argue that exuberance is as much if not more a product of the technologies of the Internet than of human cognition as touted by the behavioral economists whose work I will consider further below.

Irrational Exuberance

San Francisco is a city founded on boom and bust, innovation and destruction. The California Gold Rush in 1848 fueled the city's frenetic growth; after the bust, the city was plagued by crime, drug addiction, and epidemics. The great earthquake and fire of 1906 devastated most of the city, yet by the middle of the twentieth century San Francisco had re-established itself as an important economic and cultural hub. In the 1960s and 1970s, San Francisco was the epicenter of many progressive movements including the antiwar movement, the Black Panthers, and gay liberation, only to be followed by the AIDS epidemic, economic blight, and a significant rise in homelessness in the 1980s.[58] By the 1990s, San Francisco seem poised for a Renaissance, and indeed the city and neighboring Silicon Valley became the epicenter of the dot-com economy as thousands flocked to the city in search of wealth.

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[58] Reagan ended Section 8 housing benefits. The closing of state mental institutions also contributed to higher numbers of homeless people.

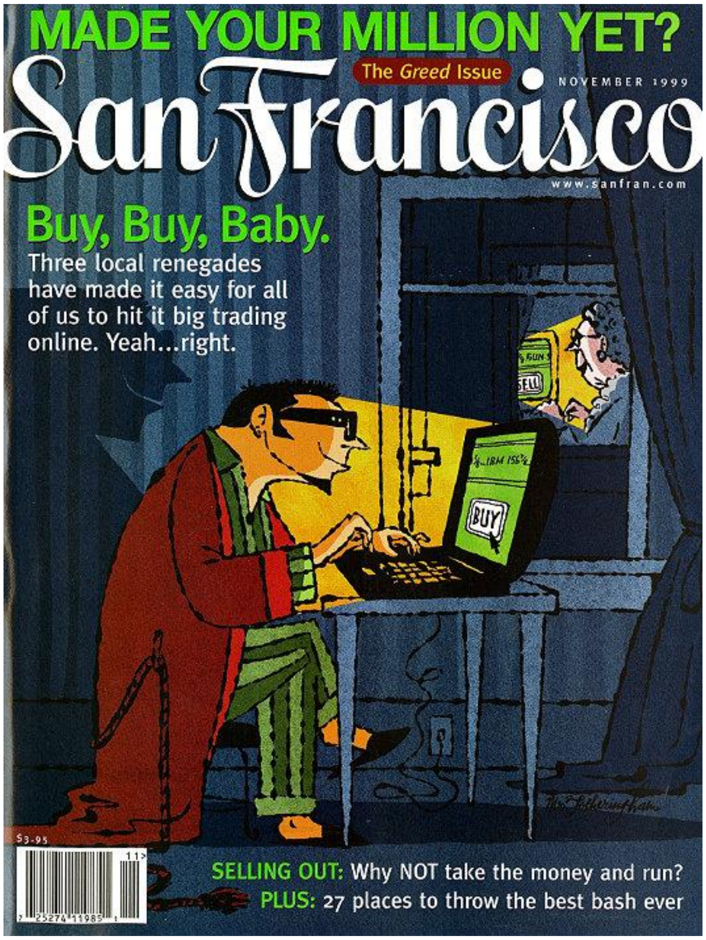

Figure 2 San Francisco Magazine "Made Your Million Yet?"

According to urban analyst Florida (2012), a primary reason for San Francisco's importance in the dot-com economy involves what he has called the *creative class*. For Florida, the creative class (which represents approximately one-third of the US labor force) is composed of knowledge workers in science and technology, media and culture, and in professions and managerial roles. As the post-Fordist economy relies more on innovation than on volume of production, the creative class has become the reference point for social, cultural, and economic change dependent now more on human potential than on well-oiled organizations. Central to harnessing the human potential of the creative class is what he calls “quality of place”: cities that offer nightlife, music scenes, restaurants, diversity, social proximity, or anything else that might constitute an “authentic” urban experience. (Two key indicators of quality of place are the “gay index” and the “bohemian factor.”) Of course, San Francisco fits the bill and indeed it tops several of Florida’s lists of cities where the creative class flourishes. Florida goes on to claim that “the real legacy of the 60s” was Silicon Valley which drew talent from neighboring San Francisco. He writes:

> The Bay Area in the late 1960s and 70s was full of eccentric technology types from Berkeley and Stanford. The broad valley south of San Francisco, midway between Haight-Ashbury and hippie havens like Monterey and Big Sur, was a natural gathering point for many of them. There were already a fair number of firms there that would hire you without worrying much about your long hair and jeans, or your weird personal habits and beliefs. . . . The engineering culture tends to meritocratic—you are what you produce—and this was, after all, the West Coast, where previous generations had come to escape the traditional norms of more established society. And it so happened that just as the younger counterculture computer people were infiltrating the Valley, a new dream was emerging. (Florida 2012:172–73).

Florida concludes that: “What set Silicon Valley apart was not just Stanford University or the warm climate. It was open to and supportive of the creative, the different, and the downright weird” (Florida 2012:174). And thus: “The tone of the Creative Economy was set. Bohemian values met the Protestant work ethic head-on. . . . They morphed into a new work ethic—the creative ethos—steeped in the cultivation of creativity” (Florida 2012:175).

Florida’s idealized narrative of Silicon Valley and of the creative class more generally elides some important aspects of politics and history that typify the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s and ‘80s. For him, the progressive movements of the 1960s become mere sources for new talent pools—largely white men like himself. He exalts tech giants such as Paul Allen, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Steven Wozniak, ignoring their often predatory and paranoid business practices. Globalized labor markets exploited skilled and semiskilled workers abroad to fuel the explosion in personal electronics. The dismantling of the welfare state and social services tended to accentuate inequalities between those who benefit most in the New Economy and those who are most vulnerable, such as the homeless. And while he extols the human potential of the creative class as the key driver of the New Economy, he neglects to account for the realities these knowledge workers often face, such as unsteady temporary and contract work, lack of health care, and skills extinction. Nonetheless I am interested in exploring one aspect of his work: the idea that certain exuberant modes of sociality have become a decisive factor in the economy.

In his oral history of the dot-com years in San Francisco, Kevin Berger (2002) interviews dozens of San Franciscans, including the editors of publications like *Wired* and *Industry Standard*; founders of failed dot-coms; politicians; and service workers, including a taxi driver, a sommelier, a hair dresser, and a stripper. What emerges is a portrait of a city teeming with creative energy, ambition, and optimism, but also one whose historically progressive politics and diversity were eroded by the frenzy around venture capital and the prospect of overnight riches. Halsey Minor, cofounder of the technology-oriented website CNET, reflects: “We all had a visceral reaction to the Internet and believed it was going have a huge impact. And there was a real energy to San Francisco—a lot of ingenuity, a sense of can-do and excitement about the possibilities. We had a role on the global stage. It was intoxicating” (quoted in Berger 2002:54–56). Another dot-com entrepreneur, Lisa Gansky, says:

> To make a chemical reaction, you need a lot of things to come together at the right time. And there are a lot of crazy people around here. The intellectual and entrepreneurial capital was here. We were all powered by enthusiasm, the spirit of wonder, the delight of creating something that was going to change the world (quoted in Berger 2002:56).

John Batelle, founder of the *Industry Standard*, observes: “There was a lot of creative energy in the city. We were a community of people—technology pioneers, thinking pioneers—who gelled. It was a cultural force, as a opposed to a technological force” (quoted in Berger 2002:56). Indeed as dot-com entrepreneur Andrew Beebe concludes, “Silicon Valley was a petri dish of bizarre genetic engineering and general mutation, which is wonderful, but San Francisco was even more so” (quoted in Berger 2002:58). Karl Jacob (founder of Dimension X) agrees, noting, “[W]e had this brand-new medium and very little raw artistic talent—we had to bring artists into the blend. So it was a no-brainer to set up in the city. People needed to have places to go after work to find things to inspire and entertain them” (quoted in Berger 2002:57).

As the dot-com sector exploded in San Francisco, so did a culture of wild parties and wasteful luxury. At the height of the bubble, tech companies threw 15 to 20 parties in any given week, costing on average $30,000 to $50,000 although a $250,000 blowout was not rare (Cave 2000:1). Sue Marino, a public relations specialist for dot-coms, recalled: “Everybody felt like they had to spend a lot of money to keep their employees happy and to keep up with the Joneses. So they were spending like crazy on the company—on marketing, on schmoozing, and on parties” (quoted in Berger 2002:68). And indeed the parties became increasingly extravagant, sometimes absurdly so. One party featured three-foot blocks of cheese and a design-your-own sundae bar. One *Industry Standard* party took place across four floors of a warehouse, each floor taking on a different theme and featuring (among other things) freshly shucked oysters, a crêpe bar, and a selection of fine and rare tequilas. At another party, guests received a bottle of expensive champagne as a parting gift. As the dot-com party culture infiltrated everyday nightlife in San Francisco, the parties only became bigger, more extravagant, and more outrageous.

Internet workers—and indeed many freeloaders—could go months without paying for a drink. Throwing lavish parties simply became a part of conducting business for Internet startups—with the intention of creating buzz and wooing new talent. Yet, as one tech businessman observed, "Originally these events got the attention of decision makers—the press, venture capitalists and other investors. But the popularity of the Internet gold rush has led these parties to grow out of control. These companies spend a whole lot of money on marketing, but end up with people who just want to eat and drink for free" (quoted in Cave 2001:2). Indeed, most dot-coms that threw big parties made little effort to measure any of their touted benefits: increased sales, new partnerships, or new hires or better retention rates (Cave 2001:2). The exuberant, celebratory culture of the dot-com sector spilled over into a more general party atmosphere and nightlife energy throughout San Francisco. Rebecca Wilson, a writer and exotic dancer, recalls:

> Dot-com guys would come into Mitchell Brothers and spend $10,000 on lap dances. I knew two girls who became kept mistresses of some CEO, some computer genius who had helped invent some sort of virtual-reality digital-camera thing. He was five-foot-three, really dweeby looking. He'd take these girls out to openings, and he'd have his arms around each of them… I tell you, all these computer guys—they were like a bunch of nerdy professors going into the strip clubs (quoted in Berger 2002:68.)

One sommelier opened the high-end restaurant Azie:

> at the apex of the dot-com volcano, because we realized the demand for a top-end establishment. We bought the best foie gras and the best caviar we could get. The wine list was the same way, because there was demand for it. We had quite a few bottles over $1000 and sold a couple of them a week. We sold a whole lot more $300 to $400 bottles (quoted in Berger 2002:68).

As Kevin Berger's oral history reveals, all sorts of workers in the city's service sector—from architects to hair stylists to food servers to hotel managers—embraced the city's mood of optimism and euphoria as wealth and creativity seemed to be endless in supply.

The Internet became synonymous with *the economy* in the 1990s. In his analysis *The Roaring Nineties* (2003), Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz characterizes the period as one in which a kind "schizophrenia" seized the economy, an upset of the operative balance and equilibrium between Wall Street and Main Street, between Old Industry and New Technology, and between government and the market. With the end of communism in the early 1990s, the so-called New Economy seemed to usher in a new era of prosperity—both in the US and globally—as the power of the market would no longer be hindered by Cold War policies and fears. New computing and communication technologies would allow business to function more smoothly, shifting economic emphasis from manufactured goods to people and ideas. Most importantly, it was thought that the New Economy signaled the end of the business cycle itself and thus the ups and downs of capitalist expansion. In retrospect the "roaring nineties" ended up becoming a classic case of an economic bubble, not unlike the Dutch tulip bubble of the 1630s that economists are so found of citing. But, as Fed chairman Alan Greenspan pointed out, a bubble is only a bubble in retrospect, after its bursting has confirmed its existence.[59] Nonetheless, Stiglitz points out that the "seeds of destruction" had long been in place—deregulation run amok (especially in the telecommunications and banking sectors), hype around the Internet and dot-coms, large tax cuts, and "creative accounting" techniques, to name a few—

[59] See Stiglitz (2003:63–64).

and that Greenspan was well aware of the risky economic climate. After all, in a December 1996 speech Greenspan himself warned of “irrational exuberance” on the part of investors, setting off a minor panic and quickly becoming a catchphrase that would forever be associated with Greenspan and his tenure at the Federal Reserve.

The economic exuberance of the 1990s (whether rational or not) brought national attention to the economy in unprecedented ways. Bill Clinton’s unofficial campaign slogan, “It’s the economy, stupid,” helped him defeat George H. W. Bush in the 1992 presidential election. And as the economy grew, so did the public’s interest in it. Part of the reason for this was the fact that individuals’ livelihoods became tethered to the economy in new ways: pensions become 401ks tied to the market; contract and temporary work began to replace long-term, salaried positions; and ordinary people began to “play” the market through websites like E*Trade in hopes of a big “win.”[60] The economy assumed center stage, with corporate CEOs attaining celebrity-like status and economic experts becoming media personalities offering sound bites about where to invest or evaluating the health of the economy. As Stiglitz (2003:32) remarks about the 1990s, “Economic policymaking began to be described almost as if it were a sporting event, with the outcome dependent on the nimble moves and athletic prowess of a handful of superstars, working, it was said, selflessly and harmoniously in the cause of the nation’s prosperity.”

From the point of view of the Fed, the “irrational exuberance” fueling the bubble was dangerous mainly because bubbles distort prices. Since Paul Volker became Fed chairman in

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[60] Richard Sennett (2007) describes many of these changes in *The Culture of the New Capitalism*.

1979, the Fed's primary concern has been to curb inflation because inflation translates directly into public opinion. This issue raises the question: for whom does the Fed really work—the public or Congress? Nonetheless, rather than raise interest rates and potentially stall economic growth, Greenspan believed that the market would eventually self-correct with a little inspiration: "In short, it seemed he had hoped to tame the bubble—and save the nation from a bubble-bursting—*by words alone*" (Stiglitz 2003:58).

While Greenspan's warning of irrational exuberance in the stock market may not have worked to tame the bubble, it animated interest, both public and expert, in behavioral economics, a subfield of economics that studies the psychology behind human behavior, decision making, and opinion with regard to the market, employment, and other financial matters. Mainstream economists had long taken a rather simplistic stance with regard to human economic behavior: we rationally seek to maximize utility and avoid loss. Yet the new economic culture of the roaring nineties demanded different ways of understanding economic psychology the primary reason that market efficacy was becoming ever more intimately tied to how people feel about it.[61] Economists were faced with the task of explaining the less rational aspects of market behavior. In his bestselling book *Irrational Exuberance* (2000), economist Robert J. Shiller uses Greenspan's now-famous catchphrase as a starting point for analyzing the factors that created the market boom and bust of the 1990s. In general, Shiller argues that there was a basic disconnect between stock valuation and basic economic indicators, a disconnect driven by incomplete

[61] Economists have long acknowledged (if understated) that public opinion has a powerful effect on economic behavior. The shift to financialization has only intensified this fact.

information,[62] wishful thinking, and a "lack of sobriety" on the part of investors. Even a cursory examination of the gap between stock prices and actual earnings belies this problem:

Figure 3. Stock prices and earnings, 1871–2000. Reprinted from Shiller (2001:6). Shiller compiled data from S&P Statistical Service; US Bureau of Labor Statistics; Cowles and Associates, *Common Stock Indexes*; and Warren and Pearson, *Gold and Prices*.

Shiller points to four basic factors in his analysis of the 1990s economic bubble: structural, cultural, psychological, and academic. Yet all of these factors for him tend to have the same result: muddled thinking, unwarranted optimism, misperceptions, and "attention cascades"—in other words, some sort of bad behavior or distorted psychology on the part of economic actors. For example, one structural factor that Shiller cites is the effect of Baby

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[62] The notion that markets and prices are distorted due to "incomplete information" is a favorite explanation among economists. Economic actors behave rationally, but only with the information available to them at the time, which may result in irrational effects. In short, economists get to have it both ways: markets function, and actors are rational, but lack of adequate information may result in market dysfunction or irrationality.

Boomers: as Baby Boomers begin to reach retirement age, they will compete among each other to buy stocks and increase spending, thus spurring economic growth. Yet for Shiller, this is not in fact a real occurrence, only a perceived one. And thus it becomes not structural at all, but psychological. In all of the compelling sources of irrational exuberance that Shiller offers—from the introduction of the Internet, to capital gains tax cuts, to increased media coverage of the economy—Shiller emphasizes how these various factors have a powerful cumulative effect. Indeed, it is the amplification of these factors that create what he calls a "naturally occurring Ponzi process" through feedback loops which heighten affects of confidence and optimism (Shiller 2001:56). More troubling from the point of view of economists is that it is difficult to predict how investors will behave in a given situation and what the cumulative effects will be. As Shiller (2001:147) points out:

> Psychological anchors for the market hook themselves on the strangest things along the muddy bottom of our consciousness. The anchor can skip and drag, only to snag again on some object whose strength would surprise us if we saw it at the surface. . . . But the anchors can have significance for the market as a whole only if the same thoughts enter the minds of many [and precipitate] the tendencies toward herd behavior and the contagion of ideas.

The irrational exuberance of the 1990s described by Greenspan and Shiller prompted economists to draw more explicitly from the field of cognitive psychology, such as the work of psychologist Daniel Kahneman who went on to win the Nobel Prize in 2002—not in psychology but in economics. One of Kahneman's most influential essays from the 1970s (written in collaboration with Amos Tversky) aimed to discredit two basic assumptions held by social scientists (especially economists): people are generally rational and rational thought is susceptible to corruption by emotions. Kahneman and Tversky (1979) argue that systematic errors in cognition (not emotion) are the source of incorrect calculations and thus irrational decision making. In his recent book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (2011), Kahneman compiles and synthesizes his life's research for a general audience. As the title suggests, there are two basic types of thinking. Fast thinking—System 1—is automatic, involuntary, and intuitive. System 1 makes basic assessments in order to match experiences across contexts. Therefore it often draws on embodied knowledges from cumulative experience. System 1 thinking can be quite powerful, accounting for anything from the ways experts can make quick decisions (a surgeon, a chess player) to ordinary people's mundane activities (driving a car). Yet, System 1 thinking is prone to error since it relies on intuition. Slow thinking—System 2—is calculating and allocates attention to effortful mental activity; it is associated with deliberate choices, agency, and concentration. At any given time, both systems are at work. And while System 2 "monitors" the suggestions of System 1, System 2 tends to be "lazy" because attention tends to be depleted, particularly in activities that make high demands.

At first glance it might seem that Kahneman's understanding of human cognition is at odds with Shiller's rather hysterical, Le Bon-esque account of irrational exuberance. Rather, Kahneman merely elaborates the cognitive processes that explain how and why exuberance, wishful thinking, optimism, etc. actually manifest and become efficacious. For example, Kahneman notes that System 1 thinking is pleasurable because it involves cognitive ease; System 2 thinking involves cognitive strain and is therefore unpleasurable. Pleasure and good mood lower System 2's vigilance over System 1, allowing "fast thinking" to dominate at times (or least "get away" with more than its share). Moreover, System 1 typically involves biases of individual likes, dislikes, and feelings that comprise an *affect heuristic* that deeply influences decision making, so much so that System 2 becomes less of a monitor or critic of an individual's emotions than an apologist or endorser.[63] Thus all of the sources of irrational exuberance described by Shiller remain legitimate. What Kahneman and his colleagues add to the explanation is why and how emotion gets embedded into the way we think and make decisions.

In a broader context, the problem of irrational exuberance for Stiglitz, Shiller, Kahneman, and others retains an understanding of political economy that is—as Randy Martin (2013:85) puts it—"[nostalgic] for the lost island of blissfully knowable equilibrium." Martin, David Staples, Allan Stoekl, and other theorists of political economy have found Bataille's understanding of exuberance in the *general economy* useful because it accounts for the ways in which excess and waste become not only productive forces, but also forces that shape religion, sexuality, technology, and war (to name just a few). For behavioral economists, the cognitive processing of affect and emotion accounts for disequilibrating effects but not disequilibrium per se. What they fail to consider is that exuberance—or affect itself—might be an excess that is a productive force in its own right, as well as a potentially destructive force. Recall that for Bataille, every economy is characterized by excess exuberance and energy—the accursed share—that must be put to use or squandered. Bataille (1991:30–31) writes: "If it is necessary to respond to exuberance, it is no doubt possible to use it for growth. But the problem raised precludes this. Supposing there is no longer any growth possible, what is to be done with the seething energy that remains?" When economic growth is no longer sustainable, the excess energy is redirected toward other endeavors, ranging from wasteful luxury to the squander of war. Read through Bataille, the speculative bubble of the roaring nineties ceases to be an

[63] The term *affect heuristic* was coined by psychologist Paul Slovic

aberration of the market or a reflection of cognitive mistakes, but a rather typical example of how exuberance accumulates and becomes excessive, even to the point of squander. Following Bataille, Staples (2007:139–40) points out that the economy is constantly vexed by this problem of entropy and thus "the excesses of wealth, energy, and work . . . are being used to manage, divert, or mitigate class, race, and gender antagonisms." This point will become more evident in my discussion further below about policy regarding homeless people in San Francisco in the wake of the dot-com bubble.

Another key issue here for understanding the economy and culture of the 1990s is the relationship between exuberance and technology. For Bataille, technology plays a key role in distributing excess energy by extended it into more and more spheres of social life. Paradoxically though, it also makes more energy available, thus limiting the dissipative effects of economic growth. Bataille (1991:36–37) writes:

> The fact is that the revivals of development that are due to human activity, that are made possible or maintained by new techniques, always have a double effect: Initially, they use a portion of the surplus energy but then they produce a larger and larger surplus. This surplus eventually contributes to making growth more difficult, for growth no longer suffices to use it up.

Somewhat strangely, the introduction of the Internet and related technologies plays a rather minor role in both Stiglitz's and Shiller's account of the 1990s economic bubble. Shiller (2001:19) for example characterizes the Internet almost as a passing fad, "a source of entertainment and preoccupation for us all, indeed for the whole family." Predictably, Shiller attributes greater important to the *psychological* effects of the Internet (rather than as a productive technology in its own right), stating that "using the Internet gives people a sense of mastery of the world," which in turn creates a "public impression" that it is economically more important than it actually is.

The Bridge Trilogy: Technology and Exuberance in San Francisco's Future

Gibson's Bridge trilogy (*Virtual Light* (1993), *Idoru* (1996), and *All Tomorrow's Parties* (1998)) offers a cultural counterpoint to the exuberant dot-com economy. Written in the 1990s and set in near-future San Francisco, many of the trilogy's themes mirror that of this chapter: the unique sociality encapsulated in networked technologies, their political potentials as well as dangers, the physical and social transformation of the city by new technology, the euphoric (and ominous) feeling of exuberance, and the heralding of new subjectivities—both human and nonhuman—by ever-mutating global capitalism. The first installment, *Virtual Light*, essentially begins with a party—a huge, never-ending party that's been going on for years and traveling the globe: London, Prague, Macau, and now San Francisco. Chevette Washington, a bike messenger, stumbles upon the party in the course of her last delivery of the day where she meets an assortment of sleazy, obnoxious characters. Perhaps out of spite, she swipes a pair of sunglasses from a man's jacket before hastily returning home to the Bridge, the SF–Oakland Bay Bridge partially destroyed after an earthquake and now inhabited by anarchists and punks (and a clear allusion to real-life San Francisco's large homeless population). Chevette discovers that these are no ordinary sunglasses, but actually a communication and computational device that interacts directly with the optic nerve. Moreover, we soon learn that the glasses contain proprietary plans to rebuild San Francisco using nano-assemblers—microscopic devices that can erect buildings out of existing materials: office buildings, residential complexes, recreational spaces "that kind of *grew*, but only because they were made up of all these little tiny machines" (Gibson 1993:325).

Upon discovering that the glasses are missing, the Sunflower Company hires ex-cop Berry Rydell to assist in the search. But when he learns that the corrupt San Francisco police and company goons will likely kill Chevette, he decides to help her flee with the glasses to Southern California (now a separate state). After a cat-and-mouse chase down the coast of California, Rydell and Chevette team up with hackers in the secret anarchist organization "The Republic of Desire" and producers at the reality show "Cops in Trouble" to trick the corrupt police into being arrested by a Los Angeles antiterrorist unit. Rydell and Chevette are optioned to star in a new episode of "Cops in Trouble."

The tone of the novel is at once ironic, ominous, and enthralling. The character Shinya Yamazaki is a sociologist documenting the Bridge culture for his doctoral study, and it is his observations that serve as a reference point for the reader to evaluate the social life in near-future San Francisco. The setting reflects named and unnamed disaster—definitely an earthquake, possible civil war, widespread chaos and corruption. However, the primary source of foreboding is the stark contrast between life on the Bridge and the sterile corporatized "vision" of San Francisco as potentially rebuilt by the nano-assemblers. The Bridge represents an autonomous zone, a place where community thrives without authority. Its residents draw from the fringes of society: disaffected youth, homeless people, free thinkers, anarchists, punks, drug addicts. The rebuilt San Francisco would be a life dominated by invisible machines and strict planning—and a direct threat to the Bridge. Indeed, *Virtual Light* uncannily anticipates the conflict in real-life San Francisco between the culture of the dot-com boom and the city's large homeless population.

In the second installment, *Idoru* (1996), Chia Pet Mackenzie is a teenage girl living in Seattle and the dedicated president of the American chapter of the Lo/Rez fan club. Rumors have begun to spread that Rez, one of the members of the superstar rock duo, has announced his intention to marry Rei Toei, who is merely an *idoru*, a virtual pop star. This is startling news for fans of Lo/Rez: how does one marry information? After all, Rei Toei: "is not flesh; she is information. She is the tip of an iceberg, no, an Antarctica, of information" (Gibson 1996:233). But she is also information *in* process, constantly receiving new information and feedback from the world with which she interacts, thus refining and individuating her "personality." As Rez puts it: "Rei's only reality is the realm of ongoing serial creation. . . . Entirely *process;* infinitely more than the combined sum of her various selves. The platforms sink beneath her, one after another, as she grows denser and more complex" (Gibson 1996: 267). Urged by her fellow fans, Chia flies to Tokyo for an emergency meeting with the president of the Japanese chapter of the Lo/Rez fan club. At the airport, she naively agrees to carry a package through customs for her seatmate Mary Alice. She later finds out it is the prototype for a new kind of nano-assembler, "[a] kind of egg, or a little factory. You plug [it] into another machine that programs 'em, and they start building themselves out of whatever's handy. And when there's enough of 'em, they start building whatever it was you wanted them to" (Gibson 1996: 258). Chia discovers that she is being followed by Mary Alice and Russian gangsters, but is unaware that she is still carrying the hijacked nano-assembler in her backpack. With Masahiko (the brother of a Lo/Rez chapter member), Chia goes to the Hotel Di and virtually plugs into the Walled City—an online multiuser domain—to find out who's following her and why.

Chia's story is overlaid with Colin Laney's. Laney has a unique talent: he is able to look at huge amounts of data and decipher "nodal points"—that is, trends or patterns in all of the data generated by individuals or groups—and by reading nodal points he is able to predict the future. Because of this particular ability, Laney is "discovered" by sociologist Shinya Yamazaki and hired by ParagonAsia Dataflow, a Lo/Rez holding company, to uncover Rez's true intention in marrying the idoru Rei Toei. Yet, Laney is unable to decipher Rez's nodal points because all of his data—his consumption, his Internet use, his travel, celebrity gossip—is generated from without: by fan clubs, personal assistants, and corporate lackeys. Laney asks to meet Rez and Rei Toei at a club, but the party is soon attacked by gangsters, who are after the nano-assembler they believe Rez has. While Laney escapes, it seems that Rez has disappeared. Nonetheless, Laney is now able to "see" Rez's nodal points when his data is overlaid with Rei Toei's; he finds that their data is about to unite at the Hotel Di. In a whirlwind finale, Laney, Mary Alice and the gangsters, Rez and his bodyguards, and Chia and her friend converge at the hotel room where ParagonAsia Dataflow acquires the nano-assembler in exchange for a piece of Tokyo real estate. With thousands of screaming fans outside the hotel thinking that Rez has died, it is unclear if the nano-assembler will be used to actualize Rei Toei into a living body.

If the tone of the earlier novel *Virtual Light* reflects the exuberance and dread around the transformation of urban space, then *Idoru*'s reflects similar affects about the efficacy of sociality in a world hypermediated by networked communication technologies and celebrity culture. Almost all of Chia Mackenzie's interactions take place in the online world of the Lo/Rez fan club or the Walled City. Rez has fallen in love with Rei Toei, a persona comprised only of accumulated (and accumulating) data. Mysterious corporate conglomerates vie to manufacture celebrity just as they manufacture new technologies for its dissemination. For example, Laney's former employer Slitcan:

> was descended from "reality" programming and the network tabloids of the late twentieth century, but it resembled them no more than some large, swift bipedal carnivore resembled its sluggish, shallow-dwelling ancestors. Slitscan was the mature form, supporting fully global franchises. Slitscan's revenues had paid for entire satellites and built the building he worked in in Burbank. Slitscan was a show so popular that it had evolved into something akin to the old idea of a network. It was flanked and buffered by spinoffs and peripherals, each designed to shunt the viewer back to the crucial core (Gibson 1996:50–51).

By the end of *Idoru*, it becomes clear, too, that the nano-assemblers that had already begun to transform the urban space in Tokyo, Los Angeles, and San Francisco were also being repurposed to transform the nature of sociality and life itself. Indeed, once the nano-assemblers were set in motion, there was no way of predicting or curtailing their effects (and affects).

Colin Laney was last seen in a Tokyo hotel room in the novel *Idoru*. In the third installment, *All Tomorrow's Parties* (1998), existential sociologist Shinya Yamazaki finds him now debilitated by illness and paranoia, and living in a Tokyo subway station, in a shantytown of cardboard boxes, isolated from the outside world except via his computer. We learn that Laney had been a test subject for the drug SB-5 while at an orphanage in his youth, a drug that enabled his unique talent for ascertaining nodal points in huge streams of data but also one with detrimental side effects that are beginning to set in: paranoia, murderous obsessions, and antisocial behavior. Since his encounter with the idoru Rei Toei, Laney has lost himself in the river of her ever-accumulating data: "Laney's progress through all the data in the world (or that data's progress through him) has long since become what he is, rather than something he merely does" (Gibson 1998:163). Through the nodal points, Laney predicts that the world is on the verge of revolution, a momentous world-historical change that will take place on the San

Francisco Bay Bridge and involve Rei Toei as well as his latest obsession, the mysterious multi-billionaire media giant Cory Harwood. Laney reflects:

> History was plastic, was a matter of interpretation. The digital had not so much changed that as made it too obvious to ignore. History was stored data, subject to manipulation and interpretation. But the "history" Laney discovered, through the quirk in his vision induced by having been repeatedly dosed with 5-SB, was something very different. It was the *shape* that only he (as far as he knew) could see (Gibson 1998:165).

Fearful of what might happen in San Francisco, Laney hires Berry Rydell (last appearing in *Virtual Light*)—now a security guard at a 7/11-like convenience store chain called Lucky Dragon in Los Angeles—to retrieve and protect a package in San Francisco, a package he later discovers contains Rei Toei's hologram projector.

However, Laney is not the only person who has anticipated this world-historical change. The mysterious media mogul Cory Harwood has dosed himself with 5-SB and also has sensed a world-historical change that will take place in San Francisco. Perhaps a side effect of the drug, Harwood senses that someone in San Francisco plans to thwart his latest venture: to install nanofax machines in every Lucky Dragon convenience store throughout the world. Essentially, these machines would employ nano-assemblers to create exact facsimiles of any object and at any distance. After spying on Laney in cyberspace and learning of Rydell's presence in San Francisco, Harwood sends hired goons to steal the package from Rydell, who hides among the Bridge people with the help of his ex-girlfriend, Chevette. In order to lure them out, the henchmen set fire to the bridge. Harwood himself is killed, Rydell and Chevette narrowly escape the Bridge disaster, while Rei Toei instructs a young boy to take her projector to a Lucky Dragon store near the base of the Bridge. The novel—and trilogy—ends with a perfectly human facsimile of Rei Toei walking out of every Lucky Dragon store in the world.

Virtual Light and *Idoru* stage a number of disparate narrative and affective situations that readers might expect to resolve in this third volume of the Bridge trilogy. But as with Bacon's triptychs, Gibson's does not conclude so much as it collapses and folds in on itself. Anxiety and exuberance are indistinguishable, past and future overlaid upon one another. For example, the burning of the Bridge at first appears to annihilate any possible alternative to the homogenizing tendency of globalized capitalism as epitomized in the ubiquitous Lucky Dragon convenience stores or the pre-programmed nano-assemblers, at once invisible and totalizing. Yet even after the disaster, the Bridge's motley inhabitants (including Rydell and Chevette) begin to reconnect amidst the rubble. More ambiguous is the meaning of Rei Toei's materialization: On the one hand, her[64] will to exist at a level beyond data and code might signal the end of human history and the triumph of machine over man. On the other hand, Rei Toei represents a new iteration of humans' "technological tendency"—not necessarily malignant or benign, but not neutral either. Rei Toei's ontology entails ever-accumulating information through interaction, and thus the possibility of advancing the highest ideals and ethics ever proposed by human beings (or, alternately, its most abysmal failures). In this sense, the character of Rei Toei is an emblem of our hyperambivalent feelings about the world we make up over and over again, creating and destroying. Indeed, while the very notion of hyperambivalence might seem oxymoronic or paradoxical, it rather describes a pivotal aspect of Bataille's conception of exuberance: the

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[64] Rei Toei began as a virtual female pop star. It could be argued that by the time she has materialized, she has surpassed the coding of male and female, if only by virtue of containing both in excess—not for identity but for interaction.

pressing need for excess energy to be expressed or released—whether gloriously or disastrously—but nonetheless expressed or released as nonproductive expenditure.

"Care Not Cash"

As the Bridge trilogy ends in disaster, so too did the dot-com bubble—although not immediately. As more and more tech companies set up shop in San Francisco, Internet entrepreneurs inevitably faced a major problem: real estate, and cheap real estate. Many gravitated toward the South of Market (SoMa) and Mission districts for their cheap real estate, and because these areas had historically attracted other workers from the "creative classes." One real estate developer recalls, "Most of the tech companies originally migrated to South of Market. As a result, landlords and developers converted these old buildings into office properties. It was a new opportunity for us to penetrate a market that was basically untapped" (quoted in Berger 2002::59). Gary Kamiya, an editor at the web magazine *Salon.com*, remarked:

> It's pretty fascinating that South Park (South of Market) was ground zero for the dot-com crowd, overrun with people sporting this neo-Beat, graphic artist look. Because in the 70s it was this inner-city park for bums and hobos. I remember middle-aged black men in the park huddled around garbage cans with fires" (quoted in Berger 2002: 60).

Although different demographically (primarily working-class Latino), similar gentrification took place in the Mission district. Peter Plate, a novelist and long-time Mission resident and leader in the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition movement, says "In 2000, the Mission must have had something like 200 dot-com companies in a two mile radius. We were experiencing the highest residential eviction rates in the country. You could see that entire blocks were being completely evicted" (quoted in Berger 2002:71). Reminiscent of the nano-assemblers in Gibson's Bridge trilogy, dot-com companies and real-estate developers along with the influx of creative workers were transforming San Francisco's urban landscape seemingly overnight.

The issue of gentrification—particularly in the Mission district—soon became recognized as the "ugly" side of the dot-com boom (see Mirabal 2009). Real estate developers, city leaders, and new residents tended to point to the "revitalizing" impact of new bars and restaurants in order to rationalize large-scale evictions and the uprooting of working-class Latino families. As historian Nancy Mirabal (2009:13) notes:

> The emphasis, if not the mythology, of the dot com boom as the economic salvation of late twentieth century capitalism led to a collective belief during the late 1990s that gentrification, despite all of its potential drawbacks, was a positive and necessary byproduct of the growing Bay Area prosperity and wealth.

While gentrification is hardly new to San Francisco, Mirabal emphasizes the deliberateness with which various economic interests initiated gentrification in the Mission, while whitewashing its negative consequences. She points out that "[b]y casting gentrification as primarily an economic by-product of a growing economy, dot-com or otherwise, it is possible to avoid, even ignore questions of difference and the role they play in the disposability of certain populations and the privileging of others" (Mirabal 2009:19).

Of course the most disposable, most vulnerable population in San Francisco is its large number of homeless people. A number of factors in the 1970s and '80s led to increasing numbers of homeless people throughout the country and in San Francisco in particular. Economic crisis and deindustrialization eliminated many unskilled and semiskilled jobs especially at the port of San Francisco; the closing of California state mental institutions in the 1970s sent many to live on the streets; and rising housing costs in the 1980s and especially the 1990s exacerbated these issues. The McKinney Act of 1987 transformed local homeless shelters and care agencies into a federally funded system of shelters and social workers. In her expansive ethnography of San Francisco's homeless population, Teresa Gowan (2010) argues that the McKinney Act inaugurated a shift from *system-talk* (the idea that homelessness must be considered alongside larger issues of poverty, unemployment, etc.) to *sick-talk* (an emphasis on individual pathology such as mental illness or addiction.) For Gowan, the proliferation of sick-talk created what she calls a "homeless archipelago" linking social workers, health-care professionals, policy experts, media, and government. This homeless archipelago not only brought homelessness to public attention but created a vast bureaucratic surveillance machine, one that could now define which poor were "deserving" of aid.

Famous for its tolerant, liberal attitudes, San Francisco was among the last large cities in the 1990s to give homeless persons a General Assistance entitlement, anywhere between $325 and $395 per month. Yet as the dot-com economy boomed and real estate became increasingly scarce, the homeless became seen as a major blight and a criminal nuisance. And certainly, a large homeless population does not coincide with the requisite urban aesthetic that Florida claims is vital for attracting and sustaining the creative class. Thus, sin-talk (the idea that the homeless are responsible for their condition and should be excluded or punished) began to enter the public discourse. It was in the late 1990s and early 2000s that up-and-coming City Supervisor Gavin Newsom began his mayoral campaign that centered on dealing with homelessness. Adopting a "technocratic yet caring language," Newsom's "Care Not Cash" campaign aimed to abolish the General Assistance payments received by homeless persons and redirect those funds to care facilities such as clinics and shelters. Care Not Cash, or Proposition N, was heavily advertised, and helped to elect Newsom to mayor in 2001. Not as advertised, however, was Proposition M, which would institute a centralized shelter intake (along with fingerprinting) and outlaw "aggressive panhandling." As Gowan (2010) aptly demonstrates, Propositions N and M represented a strategic comingling of sick-talk and sin-talk, advancing both state care and punitive measures as a way of "cleaning up" the streets of San Francisco. Below is one of many billboards that Newsom's campaign team erected in San Francisco:

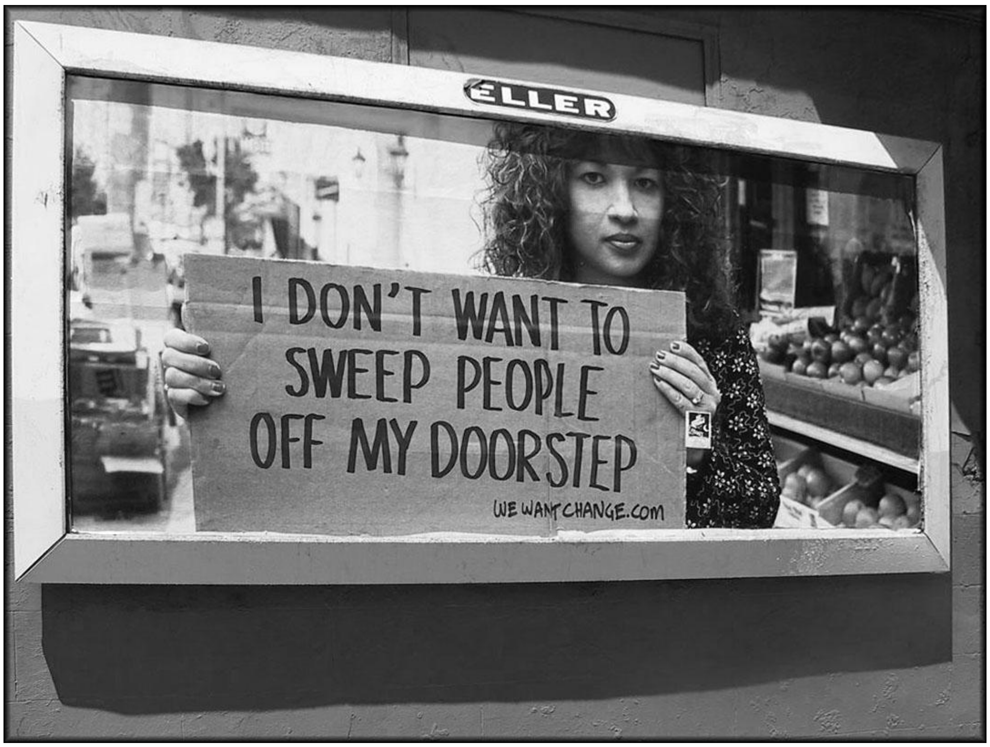

Figure 4. Billboard from Care Not Cash campaign. Taken from Gowan (2010).

Recall that for Bataille, excess (and its attendant exuberance) may be ritualized or squandered; it can be spent luxuriously as easily as it can be wasted catastrophically. Indeed, the dot-com era was also a herald of San Francisco's history of boom and bust. As Stanford Law Professor Richard Thompson Ford (2003:243) observes, "Flush with found money the city became an economic center despite itself, an eerie déjà vu of the nineteeth century gold rush."

Ford argues that "Care Not Cash" was a direct fallout of the dot-com bust in that the city's "traditional cash cow"—tourism (including hotels, restaurants, and small business)—was not only the hardest-hit industry but also the most likely to complain about panhandling and vagrancy, which was seen as a blemish for tourists. They are now far scarcer than in the roaring nineties.[65] In San Francisco's dot-com boom and bust, economic exuberance and technological promise transformed the city into a playground of excess—but with disastrous consequences. Like the actualization of Rei Toi, the actualization of the Internet brought about new socialities and possibilities, but at the expense of vulnerable populations like Gibson's fictional Bridge people and actual homeless people in San Francisco. Economic exuberance functions like the nano-assemblers in Gibson's novels: only semipredictable and beyond control once set in motion.

Coda: 2013

In 2012, artist Leo Villereal began installing the largest LED light sculptures to date: The Bay Lights, which covers the west side of the San Francisco Bay Bridge using 25,000 white LED lights. The lights are individually programmed to turn on and off, creating wave-like patterns that are never-repeating for its two-year run. The project was privately funded, in large part by dot-com moguls like Matt Mullenweg, creator of the blogging platform WordPress, and by corporate sponsors. According to the project's website (http://thebaylights.org/), the project will bring an estimated $97 million to the local community. Setting aside its aesthetic value (it's actually

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[65] Ford developed this analysis of San Francisco as a counterargument to Gerald Frug's in *City Making* (2001).

rather beautiful and can been seen on livestream every night from dusk until 2 a.m. Pacific Standard Time), the artwork recalls Gibson's vision of the city being remade by a corporate vision. Indeed, Gibson himself worried on Twitter about his fictional Bridge people on March 5, 2013, when the Bay Lights were premiered, tweeting: "This is going to make it hard for Chevette to sleep, up there."

CHAPTER 4

FORECLOSURE AND THE POLITICS OF RAGE

Introduction

Mark Z. Danielewski's sprawling, complex novel *House of Leaves* (2000) tells the story of an impossible object: a house that is larger on the inside than it is on the outside. At the center of the story are Will Navidson and Karen Green, a couple whose troubled relationship leads them to buy the titular house, only to find that its horrifying expansiveness threatens to disintegrate their lives even further. More characters join the couple to examine and explore the house and its ever-growing labyrinthine interior: a world-famous explorer, several documentary filmmakers, Will's addict brother. Yet, the house itself seems to become increasingly angry, emitting unholy growls and inciting the characters to paranoia, psychosis, murder, and suicide. Combining texts within texts, descriptions of video footage, hyperlinks to web pages, copious footnotes and editorial commentary, *House of Leaves* is a behemoth hybrid of literary genre and style. Of course, what the characters as well as the readers discover is that the house is in fact unrepresentable since its core is merely an expansive (and expanding) void, "a grotesque vision of absence" (Danielewski 2000:464). In one of the book's final, haunting scenes, Will Navidson, lost in the dark recesses of the house, uses his last matches to read *House of Leaves*—the very book in which he is contained—and then to burn it along with any possibility of his own escape. As evident in this scene, *House of Leaves* never offers a stable point of reference for the reader, raising questions about the limits of representation and the tenuousness of subjectivity in a world where individuals find themselves persistently imbricated within media ecologies.

House of Leaves created something of a literary sensation and cult following upon its publication in 2000. Of particular interest to critics and fans alike is the novel's unique narrative style, what literary critic N. Katherine Hayles (2002:784) describes as "a palimpsest of inscriptions on diverse media [in which] the story's architecture is envisioned not as a sequential narrative so much as alternate paths within the same immense labyrinth of fictional space-time." Arguing against the postmodern idiom "the subject is dead," Hayles shows that *House of Leaves* "saves" the subject, albeit a subject that is in the process of remediation through inscription technologies ranging from typewriters to video cameras to tattoos. (For example, the primary "text" of the novel is a typewritten manuscript that describes a possibly non-existent video documentary.) Subjectivity then for Hayles is a communication circuit—not between a "sender" and "receiver," but within a dense media ecology. Even the physical book itself, with its unique placing of text on the page and multiple fonts and colors, creates a circuitous, affective relationship with the reader as a kind of technology.

Mark B. N. Hansen (2004), another prominent theorist of technology and literature, builds on Hayles's reading of *House of Leaves* to argue that it presents a radical reconstitution of the novel form, one in which the novel itself is tied to the body, igniting what he calls "reality affects" for both fictional and actual readers. For Hansen, the formal and thematic ways that the novel engages with the digital is of particular interest. The titular house is paradigmatic of the digital in that it is larger inside than outside, its "output is disproportionate to its input" (Hansen 2004:609). Moreover, the house—as well as the novel itself—resists representation or capture. Rather, affects and subjectivities are triggered through reading and reproduction—not only for the audience, but also for the characters within the novel through acts of video recording, transcription, rewriting the manuscript, and adding footnotes and editorial comments. Hansen reads the house in *House of Leaves* as digital because it is created (rather than represented) in the characters' and readers' experience of it.

House of Leaves thematizes many of the primary concerns of this chapter. Like Danielewski's novel, I understand the subject as a process of mediation with digital technologies, a *quasi-subject*[66] that, here, is triggered within the proliferation and securitization of subprime mortgage loans typical of dominant yet opaque financial tactics devised to ensure market growth. I will also argue that houses—both the figure of the house and actual houses—have become a source and depository for negative affects, rage in particular. While Hayles and Hansen recognize that the house in *House of Leaves* plays a significant role in metaphorizing technology, they do not inquire as to why the house is such a fecund site for establishing "reality affects," literarily or otherwise. Hayles (2002:779) for example writes: "Camouflaged as a haunted house tale, *House of Leaves* is a metaphysical inquiry worlds away from the likes of *The Amityville Horror*." What she fails to recognize, I argue, is that this "camouflage" works precisely because of the long history of the house in the United States, both as a cultural symbol of progress and selfhood, but also as a tool for enfolding subjects into the very technologies that Hayles says the book is "really" about. Haunted houses, including the one in *House of Leaves* but also those in films like *Poltergeist* (1982) or *The Amityville Horror* (1979), have a unique place in our cultural memory, signifying destructive, traumatic, even nihilistic threats to the nuclear family and the promise of the good life. In these cultural texts, the houses become a psychic conduit for rage

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[66] See Latour (1993) for a discussion of *quasi-object* and *quasi-subject*.

otherwise foreclosed. The uncanniness of these houses, the reason why they register so deeply and intensely derive from two seemingly unrelated trends in the twentieth century: first, the American import of psychoanalysis and the proliferation of ego psychology and therapeutic culture; and second, the massive rise in private homeownership since World War II, which tethered personal lives to financial markets and the national economy. Together these trends reconfigured our notions of private and public, subject and object, through processes of spatial, psychic, and financial interiorization, and staged the conditions for crisis. By reading these histories alongside one another, I offer theoretical tools for interpreting the 2008 foreclosure crisis such that foreclosed houses—as in the familiar haunted house trope—become active agents in generating affect. My analysis of the recent foreclosure crisis and, in particular, instances of homeowner rage, lends insight into how houses, borrowers, banks, and investors become entangled in a biopolitical matrix. In closing, I attend to different ways that foreclosure and rage have opened up new avenues for political action and imaginations of the future.

Broken Houses

One of the events that inaugurated the current economic recession was the countless home foreclosures in 2008, culminating in the credit crisis in the fall of that year and the subsequent government bank bailout. Between 2007 and 2008, the number of home foreclosures grew anywhere from 20% to 30%, and continued to grow throughout 2009. A fundamental cause of the crisis was the proliferation of “subprime” loans, mortgages sold to borrowers who represented a high risk of default. These loans were then used as a guarantee for securities sold by the lending bank, effectively passing along the risk to other investors. Karl Marx (1993b) used the term *fictitious capital* to refer to any kind of capital—money, credit, financing, etc.—with no material basis in commodities. For Marx, fictitious capital is "the fountainhead of all manner of insane forms"[67] of capital; yet at the same time, it becomes indispensable for the production of surplus value and capital accumulation. In the case of subprime loans, we see an exponential abstraction of capital from any commodity, what Swiss economist Christian Marazzi (2010:63) calls "the production of surplus-value *by* accumulation," which supports the insight from historical sociology that capital expands in *systemic cycles* (see Arrighi 2004). From this perspective, the production of surplus value by accumulation—the shift from commodity production to finance—signals the waning of the United States' dominance in the current cycle of production.

There is of course a commodity here somewhere: the houses themselves, which, in the case of foreclosure, are typically reclaimed by the bank and sold (or often not) at auction. And while banks might expect some loss or decrease in value, a strange phenomenon accompanied the spike in foreclosure rates: former owners trashed and vandalized their properties—not just minor wear and tear, but major intentional damage—to the extent that it significantly decreased the homes' value. Common occurrences included stripped-out appliances, graffiti on the walls, broken windows, and buckets of paint thrown on the carpet. Crowbars were used to rip out moldings, tear holes in walls, and smash light fixtures and thermostats. In one Las Vegas house, a ferret left behind by the residents wreaked havoc, including scratched-up floors, gnawed plaster, and feces in the carpet; this particular house sold for an estimated 35% less than it could

[67] Quoted in Harvey (2006:70); originally in Marx's *Capital*, Volume 3.

have, according to one realtor. Other animals left behind by their owners—later dubbed "foreclosure pets"—became a growing problem, in some cases attracting other abandoned animals in the neighborhood. In one Cleveland-area home more than 90 feral cats were found after it had been foreclosed (Miller 2009). According to one survey by a Washington, DC, marketing research firm, real estate agents estimated that about half of foreclosed properties nationwide had "substantial" damage (Griffin and Fitzpatrick 2009).

Of course, real estate agents face numerous challenges when attempting to sell a house that has such substantial damage, and agents have documented the home damage on videos. Some are posted online to YouTube: In one video of a home in Henderson, Nevada, the realtor slowly walks through the house, zooming in on ripped-out kitchen cabinets, cracked molding, stained walls and carpet, and stripped fixtures.[68] Another video of a home in Arizona details similar damage: holes in the wall, stripped-out fixtures, and even ripped-out ceilings with fiberglass strewn about.[69] What's striking about these videos and so many more like them is that the subject is always the house itself: aside from some occasional dialogue from the person holding the camera, the viewer only sees the damaged house and the traces of the previous owners' rage. Indeed, these digital captures eerily resonate with the documentary footage of the enigmatic house dramatized in *House of Leaves*.

One writer for the *Wall Street Journal* called these instances of home destruction "buyers' revenge" (Philipps 2008); but I argue that the rage they reflect is unique to the present financial crisis. Imagine the resentment or hate, the bodily strength, the single-minded purpose it

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[68] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PogiIwr8aQM

[69] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MlrNWxS6vk

would take to destroy a home to this extent. Some instances of home damage have been so intentional and well planned that professional contractors were hired to inflict irreparable damage to valuable, custom-made features of the house. And even though the house itself appears to be the object of rage, I argue this rage must be seen as more abstract, unattached, generalized, and even productive.

The Problem of Rage

Rage is a rather difficult affect to adequately assess, which is not to say it is unfamiliar or unrecognizable. For example, one may be "blinded by rage" in an instant, animated by passion or exceptional circumstances. Alternately, one may be "prone to frequent rages"—suggesting a personality characteristic or neurotic symptom. Perhaps one's rage relates specifically to work or a relationship, or perhaps it is a more generalized outlook on the world. Literary theorist Ngai (2004) uses the term *ugly feelings* to describe certain negative emotions like envy or irritation that vary in duration, lack a subjective/objective distinction, and are not cathartic. Anger, for example, usually has an object, duration, and resolution. (I am angry at you for borrowing my car without asking. I accept your apology and am no longer angry.) Rage, on the other hand, is more akin to Ngai's ugly feelings in that its objects and duration are ambiguous. Yet, rage is violently dramatic, often transformative, while Ngai's ugly feelings are "minor," muted, and ambient.

Psychoanalytic theory also has relatively little to say about rage or affects in general. For Sigmund Freud, affects are expressions of repressed instincts and memories. Affects themselves are never repressed but are the outward expression attached to repressed ideas. Jacques Lacan (1992:102) builds on Freud's understanding, claiming that Freud viewed affects "not as signifiers but as signals," which explains their "displaceable significance" qualitatively. This insight prompted Lacan (1992:103) to theorize affect as "the failure of an expected correlation between the symbolic order and the response of the real." Even while affect is undertheorized within the Freudian tradition, psychoanalysis's silence with regard to rage is still somewhat surprising: after all, as analyst Michael Eigen (2002) points out, Oedipus killed his father in an instance of road rage! For Eigen, rage consistently appears in his own clinical practice, taking numerous forms from the life-affirming to the obliterating. Importantly, Eigen (2002:10) notes that "Rage can lead to change. It can force others to hear that something is wrong, call attention to oneself or one's cause, stimulate the need to help. Rageful cries of pain sometimes have social value. Noise attracts notice and makes aspects of one's state visible to others."

In effort to interpret homeowner rage in terms of affect, I begin with the psychoanalytic concept of *foreclosure*.[70] Both Freud and Lacan used the term *foreclosure* to indicate a special problem that reality poses for the subject. Foreclosure is unique in psychoanalytic theory in that it structures subjectivity without structuring the psyche, at least not directly. For Freud, foreclosure is the repudiation or breaking off from the ego of some unacceptable idea connected to reality, and thus a kind of breaking off from reality itself. Because of this, foreclosure is the precondition for psychosis.[71] Lacan developed the concept more fully to describe a domain of symbols that cannot enter the subject's unconscious: the domain of the Real. Foreclosure—the

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[70] Of course, the term *foreclosure* has a financial usage and a psychoanalytic one. While very different, both usages suggest the establishment of boundaries: on the hand between an individual and a bank; on the other between the individual psyche and the (symbolizable) outside world.

[71] The reference point here is Freud's analysis of Dr. Schreber, as found in his *Three Case Studies* (1996).

barring or repudiation of certain signifiers or self-aspects—is foundational for subject formation. In other words, the "I" is predicated on some sort of constitutive loss, the separation of the Real from the Symbolic. Importantly, foreclosed feelings or ideas are not repressed—they do not return—but are, rather, desired. The "subject" then is just as much an effect of repression and foreclosure as it is an intensive site of production—the production of desire. Unlike repression, the concept of foreclosure assumes a sociality in subject-formation, a radical outside of the unthought.[72] In other words, foreclosure is a psychic process that constitutes an inside and outside, one in which the outside functions to produce desire for the Other.

Lacan's formulation of *das Ding* or "beyond-of-the-signified" prefigures homeowner rage. *Das Ding* is a presymbolic object characterized by "primary affect, prior to any repression" (Lacan 1992:54). For the subject, *das Ding* presents a paradoxical relationship—one of proximity and distance, of good and bad will. Lacan developed the concept to theorize the figure of the neighbor and why the injunction to "love thy neighbor" fails. In the context of this chapter, *das Ding* is useful for thinking about subjects' relationships to their houses; as with a neighbor, the house—especially one procured through a subprime mortgage—becomes an object of proximity and distance and of good and bad will. I want to move beyond Lacan here to argue that *das Ding* is a novel way of interpreting homeowner rage. *Das ding* produces in the subject a vexed desire precisely because it is foreclosed. Judith Butler (1997:25) writes: "As foreclosure,

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[72] Michel Foucault (1970:326) used the term *unthought* in a manner reminiscent of Lacan: "The unthought (whatever name we give it) is not lodged in man like a shriveled-up nature or a stratified history; it is, in relation to man, the Other: the Other that is not only a brother but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and at the same time, in an identical newness, in an unavoidable duality."

the sanction works not to prohibit existing desire but to *produce certain kinds of objects* and to bar others from the field of social production" (emphasis mine). Here, the object of desire is the house, but one that is necessarily situated within larger financial structures. Financial foreclosure interrupts a subject's tenuous relationship to the desired object by bringing in the outside Other and unleashing primary affect in the form of rage. As Deleuze (1990:310) comments on foreclosure: "Is it not then the whole of our perceived world that collapses in the interest of something else?"

Interiorization

> The theory of spheres: that means gaining access to something that is the most real, yet also the most elusive and least tangible of things. Even to speak of gaining access is misleading, for the discovery of the spheric is less a matter of access than of a slowed-down circumspection of the most obvious.
>
> – Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres*, Volume 1 (2011)

The mobilization of the term *foreclosure* as a simultaneously financial and psychic phenomenon points to a larger history. I argue that the histories of homeownership and therapeutic culture in the postwar United States are mutually implicated and indicative of a kind of subjective interiorization where the financial and psychic merge. Here I draw on Peter Sloterdijk' (2011:67) theory of *spheres* in order to understand how the intimate and the political join, through what he calls "sphere transference from the intimate minimum . . . to the imperial maximum." For Sloterdijk (2011:85), interiors are "consubjective" relationships built around proximate social fields that simultaneously "contain and exclude one another." In this chapter, I understand interiorization as a historical process where the spheres of the psyche, the house, the economy, and the nation develop and expand alongside one another, finally bursting and then fusing again to create new inner worlds and political possibilities.

Trashing and destroying houses may seem extreme especially when we consider the symbolic value of a home in addition to its economic value. Indeed, the meanings of the house are powerful and varied in American culture. Jan Cohn (1979) has traced the long history of the American house as a cultural symbol imbued with contradictory national values, showing that unlike in Europe, the American house was uniquely emblematic of its larger community.[73] In the colonial period, the house stood as a visible indicator of a community's success, and as such should not be ostentatious or excessive, nor should it be too shabby. With the establishment of the American state and a burgeoning national consciousness, the question of how houses should reflect American-ness aesthetically came to occupy the minds of politicians, architects, writers, and ordinary people alike. Nonetheless, houses in the nineteenth century became a key index of national and individual progress, regardless of style. As homeownership expanded in the twentieth century, the style of home became increasingly important, not only as a mode of individual self-expression, but also as a way of distinguishing oneself from racialized and "alien" populations. For Cohn, the contradictions of mass homeownership in the twentieth century are embodied in the ideas and work of Frank Lloyd Wright. On the one hand, the American house was the emblem of freedom and democracy, "the answer to the dilemma of modern life [and] the

[73] Missing from Cohn's account is an account of the necessity of houses and building community within the larger project of settler colonialism. An elaboration of this facet of "the American house" might elucidate why houses needed a special meaning both locally and nationally. I would contend that the American house was—from its first brick—a structure in search of meaning.

salvation of the democratic system and even the source for the alleviation of the woes of the world" (Cohn 1979:111). Alternately, Wright worried that mass homeownership—especially because it was subsidized by the government—would result in aesthetically bland, mediocre houses built to be resalable.

Homeownership has long been synonymous with the American Dream and its range of positive significations (upward mobility, hard work rewarded, prestige, assimilation) alongside its more ugly histories (genocide, Jim Crow segregation, anti-immigrationism). In the latter half of the twentieth century, the home became the privileged site of the expanding, standardized consumption associated with Fordism—the house itself now available to an increasingly affluent working class, as well as the cars, televisions, appliances, and furniture that filled it. In this sense, we might even consider homeownership or the promise of homeownership to be one of Fordism's key regulatory mechanisms that provided a focal point for consumption and investment. Ideally, the house would help to establish and maintain discrete subjectivities (citizen-subject, consumer-subject, laboring-subject) by stabilizing a boundary between inside and outside, private and public. In this sense, the house serves too as reference point for conceiving our individual selves—for memories and how we remember, for childhood and family, for emotions like joy or love, pain and trauma. In a sense then, to own a home—to be a homeowner—is in many ways to also own that symbolism and history: to be subject to it.

This history of mass homeownership reveals a contradiction within Fordist accumulation strategies in that personal life enters the commodification process on a much larger scale than ever before.[74] The Federal Housing Administration was established as part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "New Deal" to "encourage improvement in housing standards and conditions, to facilitate sound home financing on reasonable terms, and to exert a stabilizing influence on the mortgage market" (National Housing Act 1934). The scope of the FHA was greatly expanded by the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944. As it was more popularly known, the GI Bill was devised as an antidote to what was considered the most pressing national problem of the time: how to re-integrate the 16 million veterans returning from war. The GI Bill provided numerous benefits to veterans, including education, health care, and, importantly, government-guaranteed home loans. While the Bill was ostensibly motivated by concern around the national economy, it was also meant, as Roosevelt announced himself, to "teach [our youth] to live useful and happy lives" (reprinted in Jackson 1985). The GI Bill was implicitly designed to address the psychological tolls of war—trauma, loss, stress—along with its more explicit public agenda by providing soldiers the economic means for private life. And this was not just for the men. As executive secretary of the National Council on Family Relations, Evelyn Millis Duvall wrote in 1945, women's "mental health may be a key factor in the immediate post-war readjustments as well as in the remaining wartime demands that are being made upon them" (77). Duvall saw loneliness in particular as major problem among the "wives and sweethearts" of servicemen.

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[74] Thus far I have not distinguished between *home* and *house*. I think it's fair to say that *house* designates the physical structure of a space of private, domestic life whereas *home* designates the specific and general meanings, ideologies, memories, expectations, and experiences attached to *house*. This point bears further elaboration. In the context of this chapter, I use the terms interchangeably but only within my argument that houses were physical and financial modes of interiorizing larger historical phenomena.

The commodification of personal life and regulation of sexuality intensified with the introduction of Freudianism. The popularization and medicalization of psychoanalytic thought became a vital propeller for the American economy in the twentieth century. As Eli Zaretsky (2005:138) demonstrates, the Fordist model of mass production, and its concomitant rationalization of work and standardized consumption, paradoxically turned “personal life into a mass phenomenon.” He writes:

> The result was a fatal convergence between Fordism and Freudianism . . . and a new focus on psychology. In the workplace, managers were urged to find out “what the employee thinks . . . what are the worker’s satisfactions and aspirations.” In the marketplace, concerted efforts to entice consumers spawned such new enterprises as advertising, film, and survey research” (Zaretsky 2005:138–39).

While much of this human relations and management psychology came from without psychoanalytic theory proper, Zaretsky (2005:140) argues that “Freudianism fueled the overall drive toward psychological thinking and provided the dominant, if implicit, conception of the mind.” So, even as psychoanalytic theory privileged the individual’s inner life, the thought was “integrated into the fabric of capitalist production” by de-individualizing production and consumption.

One explanation for this was the particular version of psychoanalysis that came to prevail in the United States. In order to avoid the marginalization that had troubled the field in Europe, American psychoanalysts sought to make the field more “scientific,” which would secure closer ties to universities and established medical institutions. Sherry Turkle (1992:49) observes: “In the story of what happened to psychoanalysis in the United States, the fact that the ‘American Freud’ was nearly monopolized by physicians, a social group under the greatest possible pressure to emphasize the useful, took the American preference for the pragmatic and raised it to a higher power." A consequence of this was a theoretical emphasis on fostering the defenses of the ego rather than delving into the (often obscure) dynamics of the unconscious. The triumph of ego psychology—what Lacan (2006) sardonically but also tellingly called "the New Deal of psychoanalysis"—allowed for the proliferation of (one version of) psychoanalytic theory, not just clinically but also in the work place, advertising, self-help culture, and eventually everyday parlance. So even while psychoanalytic theory typically privileges interior dynamics, the psyche must also be seen as a social production. This means not just that social relationships structure the psyche but that the psyche itself is a production of therapeutic encounters—from analyst and analysand, to group therapy, to the permeation of therapeutic culture in general. In this account, the psyche is not merely the interior dynamics of ego preservation but also the production of an elaborate and unspeakable exterior, what Lacan calls *the Real*.

I argue that mass homeownership and ego psychology were part of the same apparatus of governance: Government-guaranteed housing loans aimed to provide financial security not only to lending banks but especially to middle-class families as a site of lifetime investment. In this sense, homeownership was a way of interiorizing individuals' money and wealth from the uncertainties of market ups and downs. However, mass homeownership also expanded a vast financial "language" into everyday life: a language for assessing property value (which as I will discuss below was a racist mechanism for maintaining segregation), for "rating" the credit and earning potential of individual workers, and most importantly for binding value and credit into the very life and future of populations. As with mass homeownership, therapeutic culture simultaneously bracketed and commodified personal life into a regulatory mechanism. Therapeutic culture created the domain through which inner life (from trauma to sexual “normalcy” to unhappiness) could be defined, diagnosed, and treated. Together, homeownership and therapeutic culture produced a sphere (in Sloterdijk’s sense) where personal life is interiorized into psyches and homes, and a vast financial exterior generates populations connected by the national economy and indeed a global empire.

By 1972, 62% of all American families lived in their own home. And although this translated into effective divestment from cities in favor of government-subsidized suburbs, it is important to recognize how homeownership became deeply intertwined not just with national identity but also with the national economy. Indeed, statistics from the Department of Commerce reveal that “housing services” (which includes house construction, remodeling, and brokers’ fees) has constituted anywhere from 15% to 20% of GDP since the 1970s.[75] More than just material production, the housing industry stimulated the very idea of a “national economy” in public imaginations. Homeownership thus interiorizes the economy, brining the abstraction of a unified economic whole into the personal life of individuals.

This is one reason why haunted house tropes and the representation of house rage have become so popular and resonant in American culture. Consider the 1982 horror film *Poltergeist*, which was cowritten and coproduced by Steven Spielberg. *Poltergeist* tells the tale of a young, wholesome family, the Freelings, who move in into a new housing development where the father also works as a real estate agent. The Freelings are a “typical,” white, middle-class family with a sassy teenaged daughter, a nerdy son, and a precocious and preciously blond younger daughter, Carol Ann. Parents Steve and Diane are loving, fair, and only beginning to approach middle age

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[75] As reported by the National Association of Home Builders, http://www.nahb.org.

(in one scene, they smoke a marijuana joint in the privacy of their bedroom). Their house too is "typical": aesthetically similar to its neighbors and filled with all of the usual comforts of middle-class affluence and leisure, including the ubiquitous television, which soon becomes the primary technology through which the Freelings interact with their house's angry ghost. The spirit initially appears to be benign, playing innocent pranks (moving furniture) and speaking to Carol Ann through the television. It soon reveals its true, rage-filled intentions, wreaking havoc on the house and kidnapping Carol Ann to a spirit other-world somewhere within the house. Yet, the havoc is so contained within the house and so directed toward the family that it seems that there is not an angry ghost haunting the house, but that the house itself is the source of the rage.

In a brilliant reading of *Poltergeist*, media scholar Douglas Kellner (1996) argues that the film articulates common anxieties and fear of losing one's home in an era of economic instability. *Poltergeist* represents the fear of racial others (allegorized here as dark-skinned monsters) invading suburban utopia and threatening white middle-class normality. For Kellner (1996:134), *Poltergeist* more than any film of the time captures the "contours of American consciousness in the Age of Reagan [that is] fearful, consumer and family oriented, and ready to believe and do anything in order to survive." Considered in the milieu of economic insecurity and social fragmentation where people risk losing their jobs, homes, and marriages, and thus risk downward mobility, the gradual uninhabitability and disintegration of the house in *Poltergeist* is all the more significant.

Kellner's analysis of *Poltergeist* and of media culture in general remains at the level of ideology. In light of the fears and anxieties it portrays, he concludes that *Poltergeist* does not provide legitimation of the American economy: After all, the Freelings learn that their home was built on top of a graveyard, and thus they discover that contemporary capitalism (ethically or not) searches for the most expedient means of accumulation, particularly in the housing market which was and is a key driver of the national economy). Yet, *Poltergeist* ultimately portrays the family and middle-class lifestyle positively, with homeownership as a worthy goal. Given this, it is important to recognize that media culture operates not just in the domain of ideology but that the actual material production of media culture folds into—or becomes *interiorized* in—family life and houses. *Poltergeist* and other films associated with Steven Spielberg, such as *E.T.*, *Jaws*, and *Raiders of the Lost Arc*, mark the return of "blockbuster," escapist entertainment after the depressive cinema of the 1970s. The blockbusters of the 1980s are films with big budgets, cutting-edge special effects, and wide distribution—in other words, an ideology machine that is also big business. The early 1980s also marked the proliferation of media technologies in the house on a new scale: for example, the introduction of the VCR and the expansion of cable television became staples (or aspirational objects) of middle-class life in the United States. Today, elaborate home theater systems are a common indicator of middle-class affluence, and (importantly) are planned as part of the basic architecture of a house. If *Poltergeist* represents middle-class fears and anxiety about homeownership, then it must also be seen as symptomatic of a changing relationship between houses and media culture. After all, it is the television that allows the Freeling family to remain together: it is the technological conduit through which they are able to communicate with the house's spirit nether regions and their daughter, Carol Ann.

Digitizing Risk/Quasi-subjectivities

Poltergeist allegorizes how desire for homeownership (and its attendant middle-class lifestyle) is foreclosed by the avaricious development company who builds houses on a graveyard, unleashing a rage that ultimately devours the house itself. It presents too the imbrication of media culture in the ideological and material economy of late twentieth-century housing. While in *Poltergeist* the unleashed rage stems from commodity production, the homeowner rage brought on by the foreclosure crisis traces back not to commodity production but to financialization (see Arrighi 1994). The increasing numbers of subprime loans throughout the last decade demonstrates how desire for homeownership—even when financially unviable—is put to work. For lending banks, the expansion of the real estate market was predicated on the extension of loans to borrowers who would likely default in hopes of "banking" on the short-term profit of securities issued against these loans. This type of capital accumulation also meant that for low-risk borrowers (in other words, those who had a substantial down payment, a salaried job, and a good credit rating), homeownership became intertwined with the future failure of high-risk borrowers as a calculated risk on the part of banks. There is a blurring or entanglement here that I am interested in exploring, an entanglement not so much between a person and a bank but between some people's credit ratings and others' rage; between some people's desire and others' loss.

In a short but influential essay, Deleuze (1992) characterizes contemporary *societies of control* as dominated by institutions that modulate and transform one's capacities and risks through power over information. Unlike Foucault's *disciplinary societies*, which operate through the enclosure of space, control societies operate by displacing subjects in time, where “individuals have become *dividuals*, and masses [have become] samples, data, markets, or *banks*” (Deleuze 1992:5). In the context of this chapter, I identify affect and financialization as dual mechanisms of control. *Financialization* refers not just to the shift from commodity production to finance as capitalism’s primary accumulation strategy, but also to novel modes of socialization as access to capital becomes increasingly centralized and exclusive. “Simply put, finance divides the world between those able to avail themselves of wealth opportunities through risk taking and those who are considered ‘at risk’” (Martin 2007:8). Yet, it is only possible through the development and globalization of digital technologies that allow for the circuits of information required for the scope and speed of contemporary financialization. After all, contemporary capitalism thrives on circulation—as a means of generating profit and absorbing capital; as a new site for cultural production; and as a driving force behind technological innovation, the reorganization of the functions of the state, and the transformation of the habitus of space and time (LiPuma and Lee 2004:9–10). Patricia Clough (2008) reminds us too that affect and affective capacity is always in circulation, capable of being enframed as digital information and operating at any number of levels, from the dividual to the global. Thus, affective labor and economies need to be understood not just in terms of service or emotional work, but in terms of the ways pre-individual (i.e., dividual) affective capacities, including digital information, enter the accumulation process.

When we consider the desire for a home, as in the housing market of the last decade, foreclosure—in the financial sense—is required for that market as a whole to expand. More simply, homeownership for “good” borrowers means that others will invest but necessarily fail. As Marazzi (2010:40) writes, “The expansion of subprime loans shows that, in order to raise and make profits, finance needs to involve the poor, in addition to the middle class. In order to function, this capitalism must invest in the bare life of people who cannot provide any guarantee, who offer nothing apart from themselves.” Thus the Fordist regime’s homeowning citizen-subject, consumer-subject, and laboring-subject today becomes a quasi-subject intimately tied to the future wellbeing or loss of other quasi-subjects—a type of biopolitical production where fictitious capital functions through its entanglement with the everyday lives of human beings. The mortgage crisis typifies the ways in which financialization (and its attendant technologies) generates new procedures of racialization, which are new not necessarily in form but in speed, intensity, and anonymity. The Federal Housing Administration originally linked race to house and property value explicitly in its *Underwriting Manual*, stipulating racial “covenants” in the house deed that disallowed persons of African descent to occupy the property except in a service capacity. Even after such covenants were deemed illegal in 1948 (Shelley v. Kraemer), the Federal Housing Administration devised less explicit methods for coding race into property value: Residential Security Maps, neighborhood rating schematics, and insurance underwriting all took race into account, not only to encourage and enforce existing segregation but also to invest in all-white suburbs and to divest inner cities of resources for even basic maintenance (Jackson 1985: 203–18).

While these techniques served to promote racial exclusion, the proliferation of subprime loans in the 2000s advanced a kind of racial inclusion at the substrate of financial data. The practices of rating credit and assessing house values dissociates racial discrimination from humans and re-articulates it in the “neutral” language of finance; indeed, the recipients of subprime loans have been disproportionately black and Latino borrowers (see Wyly et al. 2012).

Even more troubling is the predatory nature of these loans: not only were subprime loans disproportionately marketed to black and Latino borrowers, they were purposely devised not to be efficacious as home loans but as mortgage-backed securities. As Wyly et al. (2012:584) put it "*the products fell through the cracks because they were designed exactly for this purpose*." What made this possible were the digital technologies of enhanced credit scoring and loan default modeling that could bring consumers once viewed as too risky into a profit-making strategy as a calculable risk.

The editors of a special issue of *American Quarterly* (2012) on "Race, Empire, and the Crisis of the Subprime" have rightly argued that the subprime loan crisis draws on previous modes of racial subjugation and dispossession, and thus a represents a continuity with the legacies of slavery and colonialism (see Chakravarty and da Silva 2012). Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the novel forms of racialization inherent in finance capitalism. Racial inclusion into financial markets functions through what Clough and Willse (2011) call *population racism*—a kind of statistically organized (if provisional) grouping of some significant characteristic that produces or activates affective states with potential political, economic, or cultural value. Of course, racial inclusion by means of scientific data in the name of diversity—think of the Human Genome Diversity Project—has become normalized. Population racism operates not just by dissociating measurable characteristics (genome, credit score, consumption pattern) from people or groups; it also manufactures measures that become meaningful and possibly valuable in the social field. The subprime loan/foreclosure crisis demonstrates how this data is wielded on behalf of capital accumulation, a kind of biopolitical production[76] in which value derives more from market flows than commodity production.

Of course, the permeation of market logics and activities into any aspect of life is one of the cornerstones of post-Fordist production. Randy Martin (2002), for example, has shown how financialization has become integrated into daily life—in how children are raised, how calculations are made about both financial and nonfinancial decisions, and how people learn to accept risk and flexibility. Financialization attaches us to the market in so far as everyone cooperates, markets do well, and there are payoffs in terms of 401k earnings, savings and investments, or employment. (Or alternately, when fear or lack of confidence slow down market activity.) Even prices have come now to represent public opinion and the self-referentiality of markets, what Marazzi (2008) calls "mimetic rationality." In the last decade scholars and critics have paid increasing attention to immaterial and affective labor and to how value is extracted from the *general intellect*—a term Marx used in the *Grundrisse* and has since been elaborated by Italian autonomist theorists.[77] Extending this thought, affect itself—even the destructiveness of rage—has also become a source of value. Returning to psychoanalytic theory, foreclosure of certain desires or feelings can be considered a sort of precondition for affects. Affects are never unconscious (as affects); rather, they happen—sometimes from unconscious ideas and memories, here, from the repetition of foreclosure that is unending, modulating desire. Foreclosed homes are desire foreclosed. For the owners who destroy their own homes, desire is transformed into affect, into rage. Virno (2004) has pointed out that negative sentiments such as fear and cynicism

[76] See Hardt and Negri (2000) for a discussion of *biopolitical production*.
[77] See chapter 3 for a discussion the *general intellect* and its uses.

in the post-Fordist milieu often become depoliticized and even made to work for capital. Here rageful home destruction does something similar: wrangling fictitious capital—a toxic financial abstraction—back into a tangible, if toxic, commodity. And, while the damage to the homes significantly decreases their prices, in many cases these homes are actually more likely to sell precisely because the price is so low. Rage has become marketable. Thus, the foreclosure crisis foregrounds the ways that financialization entails not just a shift in the strategy of capital accumulation but a reconfiguration of desire and selfhood. Political economist Stefano Lucarelli (2010:136) observes that the real estate boom occurred in parallel to wage deflation and thus "the selling of another dream begins: a house that can be paid for with credit, an infinite credit and a high insolvency risk." This is what he calls "a parabola of the American dream: a house at any cost" (Lucarelli 2010:136).

Rage Potentials

The documentary *The Queen of Versailles* (2012) by Lauren Greenfield depicts a wealthy family's stress and malaise after their dream mansion falls into foreclosure. Greenfield's initial goal for the project was to document the building of "the largest home in America," which was to be loosely modeled after the Palace of Versailles and certainly meant to reflect its same grand excess. Yet the Siegel family's life takes a turn after the financial collapse in 2008. Eventually, the Siegels are no longer able to afford their American Versailles even though they have already spent millions on the partially completed mansion. (Several scenes feature matriarch Jackie Siegel walking through the property and describing what might have been: imported marble, decorative fountains, grand staircases.) More than a depiction of foreclosure finally affecting the rich, the film presents a deep irony for the Siegels in that their own fortune was built in large part on the speculative real estate boom—specifically by selling vacation timeshares on credit to people who cannot really afford them. In one of the documentary's scenes, we follow a Siegel timeshare salesman in Las Vegas giving an African American couple a tour through the property's various amenities, and then finally selling them the timeshare even after they expressed concern about paying for it.

Figure 5. Still from *The Queen of Versailles.*

The Queen of Versailles depicts the lives of several people (both before and after the financial collapse) including the Siegel's seven children, the family's Filipino nanny (who lives in what is essentially a giant dog house), the cranky and often-despicable father David Siegel, and of course the story's titular figure: Jackie Siegel, the Chicken McNugget-loving ex-pageant-queen mom whose shallowness and casual callousness provide much fodder for audience contempt. Indeed, it is Jackie's vapid lack of self-awareness (especially given her own rags-to-riches history) that most elicits a kind of Schadenfreude for viewers. Yet the representation of the Siegel's demise in the film points to a much more complex set of emotions and political positions than mere smug self-satisfaction—ones that suggest how ugly feelings present possibilities for social and political transformation.

In his provocative analysis of the psychic, philosophical, and religious histories of rage, Sloterdijk (2010) argues that psychoanalysis has been relatively silent with regard to rage because psychoanalytic theory neglects to account for a third basic drive: the *thymotic*. While *eros* accounts for the desire for objects we lack and *thanatos* for (self-)destructive instincts, *thymos* refers to a fundamental drive for respect, dignity, pride, and above all recognition.[78] Thinkers such as Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse have shown how the psychic dimension—erotic desire and destructive impulses, for example—profoundly inform social relations, from the politics of authority to the extraction of surplus value. For Sloterdijk (2010), all social formations must also be seen as "the interplay of thymotic centers of tension" in which the thymotic impulses of individuals shape and sustain the thymotic affects of political collectives. Simply put, the need for dignity, self-assertion, and recognition sustains multiple publics (including political, racial/ethnic, sexual, cultural, and class identities) and thus propels social transformation and conflict among groups.

Sloterdijk's argument has important implications here. The cultural suppression of thymotic impulses leads to what he calls the "darkening" of the thymotic dimension, provoking

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[78] Of course, Lacan (following Kojeve and Hegel) introduced recognition as a fundamental aspect of psychoanalytic theory. Yet for him, the need for recognition ultimately originates in lack of the signifying aim.

negative collective emotions such as indignation, over-zealous ambition, and rage. Importantly, Sloterdijk locates this thymotic suppression as resulting in large part from the capitalist emphasis on desire and greed over self-respect and recognition. The resulting rage can emerge in a sudden explosion or can simmer as a "chronic presentiment"; nonetheless, rage circulates and accumulates like capital, it becomes an asset. Sloterdijk (2010:59–60) writes:

> If one admits the banking and saving functions of rage assets are real and efficacious, one also understands how it is possible for rage to develop from its diffused initial stage to higher levels of organization. By passing through this progression, rage travels the road from local and intimate emotion to public and political program.

For examples of how rage can morph from the individual to the social and political, we need only look at recent history. The Tea Party movement congealed in part from shared rage: whether it was outrage over the 2008 bank bailout or indignation over the election of an African American president, rage seemed to be a unifying element around which disparate political constituencies could rally and organize. Or consider the outrage following the "random" shootings in a movie theatre in Aurora, Colorado, or in the Sikh temple in Oak Park, Wisconsin. Rage surrounding these incidents has energized campaigns for greater gun control and religious tolerance. We could thus think of rage as assembling different kinds of publics, even ones that are fleeting. Building on the work of Foucault and Gabriel Tarde, Terranova (2007) argues that *publics* are multiple: they come and go, and they coexist with other publics. For her, publics result from some kind of affective capture, from some shared event, object, or feeling. Rage then is not an identity but the precondition for particular kinds of publics that need thymotic expression.

In the case of mass home foreclosures, individual homeowners expressed their rage by destroying and trashing their homes upon foreclosure. Yet this rage has transformed over time into a political project, creating a public concerned with housing justice, homelessness, and a range of related issues. Occupy Our Homes, an offshoot of the Occupy Wall Street movement, organized in the fall of 2012 to protest evictions, interrupt auctions, and even take over vacant houses.[79] Their mission statement reads:

> Occupy Our Homes is a movement that supports Americans who stand up to their banks and fight for their homes. We believe everyone has a right to decent, affordable housing. We stand in solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street movement and with community organizations who help the 99% fight for a place to call home.[80]

And, certainly, activists have devised many creative tactics for realizing the groups' goals. In East New York, activists took over a foreclosed two-story home and helped a homeless family move in.[81] In Atlanta, protestors went to local county courthouses to disrupt foreclosure auctions.[82] In Los Angles, artist Olga Koumoundouros transformed a vacant foreclosed house into an artwork entitled "Notorious Possession," in which she painted the house gold and built sculptural installations. Indeed, art has been a powerful means of directing foreclosure rage into a political project, as in a group art show in May 2012 in New York City entitled "Foreclosed: Between Crisis and Possibility" curated by Jennifer Burris, Sofia Olascoaga, and Gaia Tedone, and sponsored by the Whitney Museum of American Art. Since the National Day of Action to Occupy Our Homes on December 6, 2012, the movement has taken hold in cities around the country and aligned itself with organizations such as Neighborhoods Organizing for Change,

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[79] See http://wwoccupyourhomes.org.

[80] Http://www.occupyourhomes.org

[81] Ryan Devereaux, "Occupy Our Homes: Protestors Bid to Move Families into Foreclosed homes." *The Guardian,* December 7, 2011.

[82] Les Christie, "Occupy Protesters Take Over Foreclosed Homes." *CNNMoney*, December 6, 2011.

Right to the City, the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign, Housing Is a Human Right, and numerous others.

The Occupy Our Homes movement typifies how rage and other negative affects can be transformed into political potentials. More generally, it points to the necessity to develop cultural and political outlets for thymotic expression. Following Sloterdjk, we see above all that the economy—any economy—can and must be understood in terms of rage. He writes:

> Just like the monetary economy, the rage economy passes a critical marker once rage has advanced from local accumulation and selective explosion to the level of systematic investment and cyclic increase. In the case of money, one calls this difference the transition from treasure hoarding to capital. For rage, the corresponding transformation is reached once the vengeful infliction of pain is transformed from revenge to revolution. Revolution cannot be a matter of resentment of an isolated private person, although such affects are also instantiated in its decisive moment. Revolution rather implies the creation of a bank of rage whose investments should be considered in as precise detail as any operation before a final battle, or actions of a multinational corporation before being taken over by a hostile competitor (Sloterdijk 2010:64).

Although still a nascent effort, Occupy Our Homes represents how individual rage is invested and transformed into affective capital, presenting the possibility for “untraveled paths for collective rage” (Sloterdijk 2010:25). Critics of the Occupy movement (including the Occupy Our Homes movement) are swift to dismiss these possibilities: for the Right, Occupy lacks a clear agenda, much less clear demands; for the Left, Occupy’s reluctance to align itself with a party or to enter the political process formally (e.g., lobbying for legislative reform) signals a certain kind of impotency, one that resurfaces in current academic discussion of the movement. For example, cultural historian Todd Gitlin (2012), an activist leader in the 1960s, emphasizes the sense of solidarity within the Occupy movement, drawing nostalgic congruencies with the social movements of his youth. Political theorist Jodi Dean (2012) calls for the movement to organize into a party in order to reclaim a sense of the “communist horizon.” Nevertheless, the

Occupy Our Homes movement reminds us that affects and emotion are as political as they are individual, collective as they are personal.

CODA

In the introduction to his classic study of the American middle classes, C. Wright Mills (1951) observed that “we need to characterize American society of the mid-twentieth century in more psychological terms, for now the problems that concern us most border on the psychiatric”(Mills 1951: xx). In particular, larger economic and political situations need to be thought “in terms of the meaning for the inner life…of the individual” (Mills 1951: xx). As the twenty-first century opens with persistent uncertainty in and dissatisfaction with our institutions, Mills’ demand to conceptualize large scale social transformations at the psychic level is all the more critical. Taking a cue from Mills, “Economic Episodes” takes seriously the powerful ways that emotion, feeling, and mood affect social life – whether in individuals’ personal life or as a free-floating atmosphere. In particular, I argue that these affective atmospheres surface around the economy-in-crisis, shaping both how *the economy* is conceived and understood, but also how it is experienced at different moments in recent history.

One of the ongoing challenges of this work is the ever-changing character of the economy. Although I think *the economy* has become an established genre in American culture and psyches, its content and meanings are always in formation – they are constantly individuating and de-individuating. Moreover, predatory neoliberal policies have tethered individuals to the economy in ever more intimate ways, compelling a kind of hypervigilance as people’s homes, jobs, health, retirement accounts, and more have become increasingly at risk. Yet even as we are more attuned to the economy, its inner workings seem to becoming more abstract and obscure as for example in the case of financial derivatives. Certainly, this contradiction has elicited sentiments like anxiety, anger, and fear in the political sphere and in everyday life. In the past six months, reports of increased instances of depression and suicides punctuate newspapers.

This emotional situation has also renewed a political sensibility that calls into question the viability of capitalism. Identity movements are increasingly locating their interests in broader social contexts, as in the case of Queers for Economic Justice. The Occupy Wall Street movement has brought attention to social inequality in general (as in the 99%) but also to specific issues like home foreclosures, student debt, and living wages. Globally, mass protest to austerity measures in Europe and the growing economic power of countries like China, India, and Brazil signal perhaps the waning of U.S. hegemony and a shift in the neoliberal policies that have dominated the world for nearly half a century. And of course, movements in the Middle East emerged in large part as a response to widespread unemployment and poverty.

It would be overly-optimistic to declare the end of capitalism is near. Rather, as Mark Fisher has observed, “the crisis has led to the relaxing of a certain kind of mental paralysis” (Fisher 2009: 78). This is why it is all the more important to be attuned to affect since – as Mills argued over 60 years ago – the inner life of individuals tells us something important about the state of the world and public affairs. Most importantly, individual emotions and feelings can overspill into collective dissent and a shared capacity to demand more from this life.

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